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**Some Pupil Referral Units Are More Successful Than Others:  
*what do key stakeholders think makes the difference?***

April May Kitchener

A submission presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
University of Glamorgan/Prifysgol Morgannwg  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
September 2009

“As humans we are complex and chaotic when healthy and rigidly orderly when ill”

Stuart Davidson

## **Declaration**

Whilst being registered as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, for which submission is made, the author has not been a registered candidate or enrolled student for any other award. The material in this thesis has not been used in any other submission for an academic award.

April May Kitchener



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I dedicate the work to the students attending PRUs. Their life experiences have driven me to do the best that I can.

## **Abstract**

The key research issue of this thesis is what professional key stakeholders perceive as the factors that result in some Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) being more successful than others. This is a qualitative study of data which was collected between 2006 and 2009 using chaos and complexity theory as a theoretical framework.

In establishing what a successful PRU is, the study identified two types of PRU provision

- Primary and Key Stage3 PRUs: staff work to reintegrate students into mainstream schools after a period of intervention.
- Key Stage4 PRUs: integration into college or work placement is seen as being more appropriate routes for older students. In addition KS4 PRU provision was perceived more as a 'long-term' provision to provide continuity and stability during the examination period.

The study provides a brief overview of early educational provision before looking at the introduction and development of PRUs in England and Wales. The study analyses responses by Estyn and Ofsted HMI teams to quality and standards within PRUs and goes on to present key stakeholder perceptions of PRUs. Factors that impact on the quality of a PRU are then identified and discussed with the main element being identified as the characteristics of the PRU head teacher.

Finally the study suggests a new model of leadership and management qualities that contribute to a successful PRU.

## **Preface**

### **Children of Pupil Referral Units**

*To contextualise this study I have provided this preface to indicate the continuum of complexities of difficulties that students attending PRUs experience and the consequent pressures on staff working in a particularly challenging environment*

A significant number of children and young people receive their education outside mainstream provision as a result of having been defined as 'problems' within the mainstream system. For many their needs are great and most often made more complex because of their chaotic lives. Many of these children and young people find themselves placed in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Before moving on to the main body of this work, I intend to give you, the reader, background on PRU students that will provide a clearer sense of the complexity of needs of students placed in PRUs and the consequent difficulties staff experience when working in PRUs.

I used '*pru-talk*', a website linked to the National Organisation of PRUs to contact PRU staff teams in England and Wales, and asked the team if they would provide me with case histories of children and young people they have worked with or are currently working with, that would represent the student population of PRUs in England and Wales. I was surprised by the enormous response. The case histories provided were very detailed and offer much data for future analysis. I have selected three case histories and summarised student difficulties identified by the PRU staff as currently being supported within PRUs. Each case history provide an individual story, what is important to remember is that in each PRU there will be many individual stories, creating more complex management difficulties for staff.

I have changed the student's identities in each case study, all other information is accurate and true detail of the lives of children and young people attending PRUs.

### Case History 1

Simon is a year 6 primary school student, he is the youngest of four children, Simon has two older sisters (12 and 13 years of age) and one older brother (15 years) who became a father at 15, his girl friend sometimes stayed over at the family home, their baby was placed in the care of the local authority. The family live in a three bedroom house situated in a large council estate. The estate was well known to the Police and Anti Social Behaviour Team as a regular place for young people being arrested for car crime and drug and alcohol mis-use. Simon's mother is 29 and has a new boyfriend who recently moved into the family home, he has two children of his own that he has supervised visits with. The children have three different fathers, Simon and his brother have different fathers, Simon's sisters have the same father. All the children have spent time in the care of the Local Authority because of issues of neglect and physical abuse, Simon and two sisters remain on the Child Protection Register.

Simon's mother has attended parenting classes and an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) programme of which she has completed five steps of the programme. Social Services and Tenancy Project Workers provide support to the family. The older brother has received a Supervision Order which is monitored by the Youth Justice Team.

Simon attended three different primary schools in five terms, his mother moved Simon between Primary schools when schools began to experience difficulties managing Simon's behaviour. The class teacher of his third school reported management concerns to the head teacher who referred to the educational psychologist (EP). A morning observation took place, the EP reported that Simon displayed significant problems with his concentration, had an inability to stay on task and follow simple instructions. The EP recommended that further assessments should be undertaken.

Before the assessment could take place Simon was permanently excluded after a number of fixed term exclusions for inappropriate behaviour, refusal to follow

instructions and for making sexual comments to female students in the play ground. It was also reported that when confronted his language was sexually explicit toward female students and to female adults when confronted.

There is no special primary age social, emotional and behavioural (SEBD) school or therapeutic provision in the authority. Simon was placed in a primary PRU and during his placement at the PRU further assessments were put in place with an EP and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). There was no specialist support to address Simon's inappropriate sexualised behaviour for a period of 7 months after he was placed in the PRU. Simon now has a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), has regular support from a specialist support children and young people who exhibit sexualised behaviour. During the period of support and counselling, it was reported that Simon remained in the same bedroom as his older brother when the girlfriend stayed over, it became known that the couple were sexually active in front of Simon. Simon is now a Key Stage (KS) 3 student, remains in a PRU and is currently cared for by the authority and has been given the status of Looked After Children (LAC).

### Case History 2

Joseph, a year 10 student, attended mainstream primary school with additional Teacher Assistant (TA) support. Joseph lives with his mother and older sister. His father, who attended a Special School in his youth, lives with his mother, Joseph has a close relationship with his father who he sees regularly. Joseph argues constantly with his older sister and a number of violent incidents have been reported to the police. The mother is an alcoholic who struggles with Joseph, father lives with his mother and her partner who controls the immediate and extended family through violence and intimidation. A Restraining Order was placed on the grandmother and her partner after threats to staff at the Primary School.

Joseph has a Statement of Special Educational Needs, he has been diagnosed



with ADHD, Tourettes, speech and language difficulties and fine motor skills difficulties, his General Conceptual Ability (GCA) is below 70. The grandmother refuses to accept that Joseph has special educational needs and when Joseph stays at her home she refuses to allow the father to give Joseph his medication.

Joseph spent all of year 7 and most of year 8 in a Specialist Speech and Language Teaching Facility (Sp & Lg STF) attached to a mainstream school, Joseph also had additional 25 hour one-to-one (1-2-1) TA support whilst attending the Sp & Lg STF. At the end of spring term year 8 Joseph's behaviour had become more difficult for Sp & Lg STF staff to manage, particularly when Joseph attended mainstream lessons in PE and art. Joseph was referred to the local secondary PRU, his placement at the PRU was part-time, shared with a part-time timetable at the main stream school. The 1-2-1 teacher assistant (TA) support was omitted when attending the PRU. At the start of the autumn term of year 9 the mainstream school felt unable to manage Joseph's behaviour and a referral was made to the Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD) special school in the authority but Joseph was refused entry because of behaviour management concerns. Joseph completed his secondary education in the PRU. Initially the authority refused the TA support for Joseph whilst attending the PRU, the ticks and twitches associated with his tourettes escalated and his anxiety increased Joseph was the only student attending the PRU with a GCA at this level and the only student diagnosed with tourettes and at times he struggled to relate to his peers. The PRU was the only placement for Joseph with no other provision in the county available to him. PRU staff supported Joseph until the end of year 11, where Joseph successfully integrated into the special needs department of the local vocational college.

### Case History 3

Kylie was referred to the PRU at the end of year 8. Kylie spent many years in the care of the local authority on a voluntary status. Her mother was a heroin addict who struggled with life, her father died of a drug overdose when Kylie was 11 years old. Kylie had attended nine different schools in four different authorities in

three years, she had lived with seven different carers including her maternal grandmother. Kylie's relationship with her mother was not one of mother and daughter, her mother was unable to set and maintain boundaries and Kylie was often found wandering the streets late at night. Kylie was known to smoke marijuana but her mother did not see this as a 'real drug'.

Kylie returned home to live with her mother at the start of year 8 but following a family crisis Kylie was placed in emergency care. Kylie's mother embarked on a drug rehabilitation programme and after some month became drug free. Kylie returned to her care with support from a social worker. Kylie's mother struggled to manage Kylie who also struggled with the expectations of her mother as she had not experienced living with her mother as a non drug user. Kylie would often abscond from home for days and on some occasions for weeks. Kylie's mother would report her missing to the police, when found she would return to live with her maternal grandmother then move back to her mother's home. No therapeutic or other specialist support was offered to Kylie. During the summer holiday of year 9, Kylie became pregnant, the father was unknown to Kylie. She miscarried in the autumn term of year 10. Kylie then developed a relationship with an older man who was known to the police as he had served a three year prison sentence for child abuse and dealing in illegal drugs. Kylie was soon using heroin daily and prostituting herself to pay for the drug for herself and her boyfriend. Her attendance was low but she would attend the PRU regularly where she had developed an attachment to PRU staff. Because of her history of absconding the authority did not feel it appropriate to offer a residential placement outside the authority. The SEBD secondary school did not feel it appropriate to offer a place at the school to Kylie. Before entering the PRU Kylie had not been offered any bereavement counselling for the loss of her father or unborn child. Kylie completed her formal education at the PRU.

These three case histories are just brief glimpses in the lives of a tiny sample of the children and young people who are placed in PRUs. They can not really illustrate the emotional deprivation that many of these children and young people

experience. Although I can only offer partial exemplars here what I have provided are examples of difficulties faced by PRU children and young people, this information was collated from respondents of 'pru-talk and conversation with PRU staff. It is important to note that PRU children and young people will often have more than one of these difficulties to deal with, often they are coping with many.

The table below summarises indicative areas of difficulty such children and young people experience.

*Table 1: Indicative areas of difficulties for children and young people attending PRUs*

Abuse	This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse. PRU staff work with victims of abuse and perpetrators of abuse
Addiction	This term refers to any physical or psychological dependence of a drug. In PRUs this currently means addiction to nicotine, illegal drugs and alcohol
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD):	The presenting symptoms are inattention, poor concentration, impulsive behaviour and restlessness. Children and young people with ADHD are at risk in terms of underachievement, peer rejection, delinquency and substance abuse.
Asperger's or Asperger Syndrome	has similarities with autism e.g. predominance of males, social isolation, impaired verbal and non-verbal communication skills, lack of empathy and creative play, unusual responses to stimuli and disruptive behaviours. The main difference with autism is that Asperger children and young people have normal or above average intelligence.
Attachment Issues	The quality of attachment during infancy and childhood is seen as influential in the development of the ability to develop relationships. Children and young people with insecure attachment struggle to relate appropriate to peers and adults. Often they experience high levels of anxiety, fear or rejection and isolation and demand reassurance and attention.
Bereavement:	because of the complex and chaotic lives of the families PRU children and young people live in, many children and young people experience bereavement of parents, siblings, friends and carers. It is suggested that we need to pass through in the process of coming to terms with loss, shock and numbness, yearning and searching, despair and helplessness and finally realisation and acceptance of the loss. Many PRU students, because of the other difficulties, are stuck in the first two stages.
Conduct Disorder	This disorder can coexist with depression and substance misuse. Behaviour linked to this disorder include, excessive bullying, fighting, aggression, fire setting and cruelty to animals and people
Developmental Delay	affects all areas of physical, intellectual and psychological development
Eating Disorders	Anorexia nervosa an eating disorder that is characterised by distorted experience of body weight and shape. The causes of bulimia nervosa remain unknown, however, there are similarities in causes with anorexia nervosa and include genetic vulnerability, biological, social, cultural and psychological factors.
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)	Involves recurring compulsive thoughts and behaviours, this can include repetitive hand washing, touching things, counting, not able to touch specific things. Behaviours are carried often to alleviate stress and anxiety
Phobic disorders:	Phobic states are characterised by a persistent, pervasive and unfounded fear of specific objects, activities or situations.
Self Harm	The deliverable inflictions of pain and injury on one's body without the intention of suicide. Self harm serves a variety of functions; controlling and reducing stress and tension, coping with anger, elicit a sense of caring, atonement for supposed wrongdoings, purging or cleansing feeling of contamination or sexual arousal, communicating distress and punishing people who are seen as a t fault or neglectful.

Separation Anxiety Disorder	Characterised by an intense separation anxiety that is developmentally inappropriate, this affects social interactions and can lead to school refusal and school phobia.
Sleep Disorders	Because of the complex and chaotic life styles of families PRU some children and young people have disrupted patterns of sleep. However sleep disorders can also be linked to drug and alcohol misuse, depression, anxiety and other psychiatric disorders.
Suicide Attempts	adolescent suicide is influenced by lack of emotional self-control, substance abuse, abuse and school and family issues
Speech and Language Difficulties	there are three terms used to mean the same thing, developmental language delay, developmental language disorder and specific language impairment, students attending PRU experience all three
Tourette's Syndrome	A severe and chronic tick disorder. The tics can improve at times but then degenerate, this change in intensity is often linked to anxiety. Tourette's is frequently accompanied by ADHD and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

*(Adapted from a variety of sources Carr 2001, Graham 1998, King, Jasmilton & Ollendick 1998, Prins 1995, Smith & Pennell 1996, Dogra, Parkinm Gale & Frake 2002, Farrell 2008)*

This table of difficulties experienced by students attending PRU is not exhaustive. The information provided in this preface is only an example of the challenges that PRU children and young people face. Children and young people attending PRUs will live with a combination of these difficulties, resulting in children and young people with complex social, emotional and education needs.

## Foreword

*As you begin to read my research I feel I need to provide you, the reader, with an overview of how this research came about and how it has been presented. Firstly, in writing up this study I have used 'reflection' as a tool to share ideas and information with you the reader. Schon (1983) was influential in developing the theory and practice of reflective professional learning. Schon (1983) examined professionals who used reflection in their decision making. Chaos and complexity theory uses 'feedback loops' to help confirm that information put into a system is correct (Byrne 1998). I have used 'reflection' in the same manner, in that my own thoughts and internal reflections have aided my decision-making when moving this study forward. I have inserted my reflections throughout the study, easily identified as 'reflection' by the use of a different font (this font) to signpost my 'reflections'. This point, at the beginning of my study is one of those moments.*

*At the beginning I had no idea what shape my study would take, or how it would look. Would it result in a PhD consisting of three separate pieces of work, as a portfolio, or one large body of work, I didn't know. In my working environment however, I was driven to find out more. I had sometimes wondered if I was the only one that knew little about my work place, Pupil Referral Units (PRU). I wondered about where PRUs came from and what makes PRUs what they are.*

*I have thought hard about how I should present my study. I have asked a number of people for advice, the message I kept receiving was that this is my study and I should present the study as I want to. With that in mind I want my study to show my development from the student who did*

*not know what her study was going to look like, to the student who has made the decision of how it will look. What you will read is the step by step discovery that I experienced.*

*In some ways this whole project is a good example of a 'self-organising system'. The main theory related to 'self-organising systems' is complexity theory (Lucas 2009). Self-organisation relies on four ingredients, (Lucas 2009). I think this study meets each of these ingredients:*

- Balance of exploitation and explorations*
- Multiple interactions*
- Positive feedback*
- Negative feedback*

*I began with the need to explore, the need to find out how and why the PRU was created. Chapter One provides the reader with a brief overview of educational provision. What I found was that like all state education we, in PRUs, have the same starting point. However, at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century I believe there were changes in thinking and provision. Seeds for what we now call a PRU were beginning to be sown. In Chapter Two I went on to look at the legislation behind PRUs, I looked at any literature that discussed the development of PRUs. On completing this second chapter I talked to colleagues about my study and found that I was not alone. Feedback was positive, they also had little knowledge, and this drove me forward.*

*I wanted to know what made the difference between PRUs. Why some were regarded better than others, what made the difference? Planning*

*the next move was not difficult. In Chapter Three I reviewed the first and current inspection reports of PRUs, and it seemed that concerns remained similar.*

*However, before I could move forward and ask key stakeholders what they thought, I found there were expectations about developing my own thinking, which meant utilising theoretical frameworks. Chapter Four is about discovering theories and recognising how theory explains thinking. It was working through this chapter and recognising the role of theory that created, for the first time, shape to my study. It was at this stage of my study that the biggest learning curve occurred. It may be that I should have looked at theories at the start of my study but the non-linear approach to my research meant that there would not be a clear flow to the study. It was only after my discovery of chaos and complexity theory that I felt able to move forward on to Chapter Five and ask others what they thought about PRUs.*

*Working through Chapter Six, I think was another significant event in this study. One of ingredients for a self-organisation system is the balance of exploitation and explorations (Lucas 2009). The balance between exploitation and exploration was tested during the next step in my study. During a feedback session to key stakeholders, an LEA Officer challenged whether I heard and listened to the voices of others or whether I just heard what I want to hear. I needed to check my data. During this stage of the study there were multiple interactions and I met with and spoke with a large number of respondents. It was this gentle nudge, from the LEA Officer, which again gave shape to the study.*

*Feedback told me that I was not exploiting data but using data to uncover differences between what makes a good PRU and a failing PRU.*

*As I moved forward in Chapter Seven I learnt that management and leadership was a main part of my study. It was only at this stage of my study that I was able to create a simple plan. I knew I needed to collate the feedback from respondents and to shape my findings and this is taken up in Chapter Eight. In Chapter Nine I create a way of testing and interrogating the shape I have created.*

*In Chapter Ten I looked again at my model of characteristics through Chaos and Complexity Theory. Chapter Eleven looks at placing my work and discusses the originality, my study brings to the body of literature already in place on PRUs.*

*I hope that this short 'story' of my study provides you with, not expectation of what is to come, but some preparation and explanation for my non-linear approach.*



## **CHAPTER ONE: CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK: An Outline of the History of Educational Provision for Children and Young People with Social, Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties**

*In order to understand and appreciate the role of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) I wanted to learn how and where the PRU came from i.e. the journey and development of provision for those students who struggled to work within the boundaries of what is understood to be 'mainstream education'. This was not an easy task. The libraries were full of literature on the 'history of education' in terms of mainstream education. However, finding literature about provision for students who struggled to stay within the norms of society's expectations proved to be more difficult. Most of the literature I did manage to review discussed education for the disadvantaged from a financial perspective, for example children and young people from families where there was no or little income. During this brief visit to our recent history of education it appeared that society during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw poverty as a causal factor of emotional and behavioural difficulties. Today we understand financial poverty as a possible factor but by no means can we suggest that all children and young people who experience childhood poverty go on to exhibit social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. In addition, it would be unwise to suggest that all children who live with financial security will not exhibit social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.*

### **1.1 Introduction**

I have created a snapshot of the educational provision offered to children and young people from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century. From the late eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century there was a steady

improvement in access to education for the masses. Educational provision development was beneficial to the children from the poorest of backgrounds.

I found that, attempting to develop appropriate support and education for students with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties is not a new problem. Legislation has struggled over the centuries to manage the problems associated with those who do not sit comfortably within society's norm. Historically, British society used a 'crude solution' in managing these students. Students were beaten, shamed or put out to work (Fisher 1996). I sometimes reflect, when I visit some schools, if things have changed so much, it seems to me shame is sometimes still a tool of the teacher. I still witness children and young people ridiculed by teachers. I still hear and see teachers blame those most vulnerable when in fact it is often the inadequacies of the teachers that subject these children and young people to failure in school.

Today the national state system offers free education for all children and young people, up to the age of nineteen, regardless of background. The roots of this system are in the 1870 Education Act, which introduced the principle of compulsory elementary education for all. However, prior to this 'state system' a variety of schools existed that offered some semblance of education to those children from the poorest families. Most of these 'schools' disappeared with the development of the state system. The main types were:

- Charity schools
- Sunday schools
- Dame schools
- National schools
- Ragged schools
- Workhouse schools

During the seventeenth century the gentry and wealthy townsmen widely believed that it was dangerous to educate the poor classes, as it would upset the social order and increase expectations beyond acceptable levels. It was however, agreed that lower classes should be able to read the Bible in order to accept their 'humble place in God's greater plan'. Charity schools were

either supported by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) or through subscriptions and endowments. Charity schools offered a very basic education for the poor but soon became a prominent feature of the eighteenth century (Higginbotham 2003)

Education offered in Sunday Schools in the eighteenth century was built around the Christian faith. Robert Raikes, a newspaper publisher, is closely linked to the development of the 'Sunday School' movement. Raikes was concerned about the quality of life of the children from the poorest families, the long working hours and those having to work in factories for six days a week (Smith 2009). In 1780, with the support of the Bishops of Chester and Salisbury, the *London Society for the Establishment of Sunday Schools* was established. By 1831, over two-thirds of all working-class children between the ages of 5 – 15 were attending Sunday Schools.

During the eighteenth century Dame Schools were a growing force, they were small private schools that provided an education for working class children before they were old enough to work. They were run by women with few or no qualifications and could hardly be described as 'schools'. Children were taught to read and write and other skills such as sewing and cleaning (Simkin 1997). The corner of a kitchen or some dank cellar was often the 'premises' for Dame schools, more often than not they were a 'child-care service' rather than a 'school'. Fees were about 3 pennies a week and the quality of education that the children received varied enormously - some teachers provided a good education, others were no more than child-minders.

National schools were set up in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century after members of the Church of England saw the success of Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker teacher. Lancaster developed a monitorial system, where one master taught older students. They became monitors who then taught younger students. Lancaster refused to inflict physical punishment on his students but devised a system of punishments that encouraged students to feel a sense of shame. The members of the Church of England set up a system which offered teaching that centred on the Church Liturgy and

Catechism and in 1811 *The National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church* was established (Silver 1983).

In 1818, John Pounds, a shoemaker, founded a 'free school' for the poorest of children known as a Ragged School. These were charitable schools dedicated to the free education of destitute children. Ragged schools also established regular dinners for underfed children. As well as offering lessons in reading and arithmetic, John Pounds, and later his staff, also taught children basic skills of cooking, carpentry and shoemaking (Montague, 1904, Silver 1983).

One of the most far reaching pieces of legislation of the nineteenth century was the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. In 1833, the Prime Minister of the day, Earl Grey set up the Poor Law Commission to examine the working of the Poor Law system. As a result of the Commission several recommendations were made to Parliament and the Poor Law Amendment Act was passed. The new legislation established workhouses in England and Wales; later extended to Ireland in 1838 and to Scotland in 1845 (Crompton 1997).

The 1834 Act created a standard hierarchy of officials or guardians within the workhouses:

- governor (master)
- relieving officer
- clerk
- matron
- schoolmaster
- schoolmistress
- medical officer

All guardian officers were subject to the Guardians of the Poor as set up by the 1834 Act. However, the schoolmaster or schoolmistress was often the position that took longest to fill. At this time education was not compulsory outside the workhouse. This was the first time that the most financially disadvantaged children had opportunities of learning although not in the most

appropriate conditions. However, there was an effort to educate those living in poverty. Under the 1834 Act, Poor Law Unions had to provide a minimum of 3 hours a day of schooling, the main diet of education consisted of Christian religious instruction and the three 'R's', reading, writing and arithmetic. As part of their schooling, children could also be instructed in skills or duties that made them fit for service which resulted in hours of physical toil, learning the skills of the lowest paid servants (Higginbotham 2003).

## **1.2 *Thoughts***

The development of provision from the late eighteenth century was aimed at benefiting the children from the poorest of backgrounds. It was clear the quality of this 'education' varied greatly, in the main being poor. The main diet of the curriculum was made up of religion and hard physical work. However, a system for providing education to all was being developed and a framework for inspection of provision was growing. For example, the education of the Hereford workhouse was criticised by inspectors in 1848. It was reported that only 6 of the 89 children receiving education in the workhouse could 'work out an account or add up a bill' (Morill 1974).

The provision which I have discussed was for those children and young people from the financially poorest background. There was no specific provision in place for those students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). During this period of our educational history these difficulties had not been recognised as needing specialist support and help. During this period Charity school, Sunday schools, Dame schools, National schools, Ragged schools and Workhouse schools were all that was available to families who could not afford the private education. There was no distinction, at this time, between provision other than what families could or could not afford. The development of all educational provision starts from the same place.

### **1.3 *Policies Focusing on Managing Children and Young People with Behaviour Difficulties***

Provision for the care and education of children, who today are thought to be in danger of becoming involved in criminal activities, is a major concern. These concerns were just as great in earlier centuries. During the mid nineteenth century philanthropic societies opened voluntary reformatories for young people that were outside 'the law'. However, the criminal behaviour of these young people was viewed with great concern and in the 1840s the House of Lords set up a Select Committee which resulted in two Youth Offenders' Acts, the 1854 and 1857 Industrial Schools Acts.

The 1854 Act required the Home Office to certify recognised institutions, which were to become 'Certified Reformatories and Certified Industrial Schools'. These institutions replaced prison sentences for many young people; they offered many boys and girls a basic education and a trade. A number of Uncertified Industrial Schools were also opened at this time for destitute and neglected children (Horn 1997).

The 1857 Industrial Schools Act aimed at improving provision for vagrant, destitute and disorderly children, who it was believed were in great danger of becoming criminals. The Education Act 1876, known better at this time as Sandon's, led to the founding of the industrial day schools and truant schools. At the start of the First World War, there were over 208 schools for juvenile delinquents with a high percentage of them being residential industrial schools. In 1933, industrial schools that were still in existence became known as Approved Schools (Duckworth 2002).

### **1.4 *Different Thinking***

In the early part of the twentieth century, the 1920s and 1930s, there was new thinking in the world of education. Montessori and Steiner were influential during this period of development with their pioneering approaches in child-centred teaching practice. This period also impacted on the character and quality of teacher-pupil relationships. Even more influential were the schools that deliberately challenged the dominant educational approach of punitive

oppressiveness. The core of the philosophy of this new approach was the belief that children and young people:

- were not born wayward or bad
- are only made so by external parental and other influences
- have a natural curiosity and desire to learn with an energy which the teacher can work with
- have, in a fundamental way, a profound sense of what is good in them (Cole and Pritchard 2007).

### **1.5 1944 and After**

It was not until the 1944 Education Act, that compulsory secondary education and provision for children requiring 'special educational treatment' was brought in by all local education authorities. The 1944 Butler Education Act recognised five categories of handicapped children who would require special educational provision; those deemed educationally subnormal, physically handicapped, blind, deaf and epileptic. A year later a further six categories were added to this list, one of which was maladjusted. This was the first recognition of 'maladjusted children'. The 1944 Education Act was a critical Act in the development of education provision for children and young people with SEBD. It was with the 1944 Education Act and later the Handicapped Pupils and School Health Regulations of 1945 that 'maladjustment' was first recognised as a category of handicap (Laslett, Cooper, Maras, Rimmer, Law 1998). The 1944 Education Act defined the maladjusted as:

*Pupils who show evidence of emotional instability or psychological disturbance and require special education treatment in order to affect their persona, social or educational readjustment. (Ministry of Education 1944)*

Before the 1944 Education Act there was a national system of Reformatory and Industrial Schools, combining in 1933 to become Approved Schools run by the Home Office. This provision supported many thousands of children and young people; some of the children and young people sent to them might have been called maladjusted, (although at this time 'maladjusted' was not

recognised as a 'special need'). Children and young people, who would be labelled as 'maladjusted', was seen as having bad behaviour that needed reforming and not seen as a special need. This was particularly true of Industrial Schools, prior to 1933. Under the 1921 Education Act independent schools were opened for 'maladjusted' children and young people. Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were able to pay fees to send children and young people to them. Another provision was that of special classes, in mainstream schools, for the maladjusted; these were set up before the Second World War (Bridgeland 1971, Cole, Visser and Upton 1998 and Cole 1989).

### **1.6      *Therapeutic Communities***

These communities have some similarities to the progressive schools of the same era, although there is one major difference in their title and role. The word 'therapeutic' is a medical term and suggests that 'clients' have some form of illness, and need a medicine or therapy to cure the disease (Webster 1996, 1998). Provision in the enlightened nineteenth and early twentieth century puts practice in psychiatric institutions, for example, the work of the Army psychiatrists during WWII at Northfield hospital. It is here that the concept of therapeutic communities was born (Main 1983). Northfield was a large military psychiatric hospital in Birmingham. The first Northfield experiment was conducted by Bion and reported in the medical journal *Lancet*. Bion an army psychiatrist was faced with a ward full of neurotic soldiers difficult to manage. Their behaviour he reported was slovenly, undisciplined, idle and dirty in ways that were outside the medical model of illness. Bion saw this behaviour not as a result of their illness but as a collusion of this group, where it was perceived by this group that they had no responsibility for themselves, it was the role of others to be responsible for them. Bion informed the patients that he was fed up and refused to take responsibility for caring about, treating or disciplining delinquent behaviour which was theirs and not his. He said that he would no longer punish them or visit them on the ward, he would be available to them each morning in his office but only if the soldiers presented themselves clean and properly dressed. Over the next few weeks the ward became filthy, patients went absent with leave, drunkenness



increased, conflict increased between the soldiers. It was not long before the patients begged Bion to intervene in the chaos, he refused to take responsibility for their behaviour but discussed it with them. Slowly the patients started to take responsibility for themselves and each other. They formed their own discussion groups and rotas, order was no longer imposed from above and Bion's ward soon became the most efficient in the hospital. Bion's approach was not seen by the army as positive and as a result of his experiment he was soon sacked from his job in the hospital, even with the success of patients moving forward taking responsibility for themselves and feeling a sense of achievement (Main 1983). At this time Northfield was not a therapeutic community, it was a community in which therapy was occurring. Michael Foulkes (1964, 1974), took Bion's work in Northfield forward, working on areas such as group therapy and family therapy. The therapeutic approach, in the main, remains in the medical model and when working with adults.

Therapeutic communities for young people without a recognised medical illness in Britain date back to the 1930s. Grith Fyrd ('peace army' in Old English) was a radical alternative educational movement in England during the 1930s. Grith Fyrd created two camps, one in Hampshire and one in Derbyshire, places were offered to unemployed young men, the aim of the camps was to create a land-based community. The campers, or Pioneers, built the camp buildings, furniture around the camp and produced their own food. The aim of Grith Fyrd was to create communities that were self-sufficient with 'Pioneers' who were self-reliant, who would work and learn together. However, in the late 1930s the Grith Fyrd movement died out as living experiment (Field 2000).

In May 1935 a meeting was initiated by the Girth Fyrd council to discuss the proposal to set up Q Camps (Q stood for quest), these camps were to be places where young men could live in a supportive community, where individuals could regain self-respect and improvement in self-control, social behaviour, physical health and mental alertness (Jenkins 2006). Also at this time David Wills, the first British psychiatric trained social worker to be trained

in America, had spent a number of years working in hostels for maladjusted boys, wrote an article for *The Friend*, calling for new ways in the treatment of young offenders. He was contacted by members of the earlier Grith Fyrd inviting him to meet and set up their first camp (Q Camps 2009). Hawkspur Camp was established with David Wills as the Camp Chief. The camp was set up as a self-governing approach with all decisions made by a Camp Committee that included staff and young people, but where people took responsibility for their own actions and learned not to place responsibility for their behaviour on others. Q Camps were described as environments that were created as:

*"...outlets for both positive and negative feelings, where socially maladapted young adolescents would be seen as a whole personality, intellectual, emotional, physical and environmental and with the appreciation of the existence of unconscious as well as conscious mental process. This appreciation of unconscious factors will lead to careful restraint from undue interference with the inner life of the children..."* (Q Camps Committee 1944)

The Hawkspur Camp came to an end at the onset of World War II, but Wills went on to pioneer work with children and young people, others working with him also went on to pioneer work in this area, for example Dr Dennis Carroll a young psychiatrist working with Wills at Hawkspur Camp went on to work alongside people like Bion at Northfield Military Psychiatric Hospital. Wills later, between the 1950s and 1970s, went on to create therapeutic communities for children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in Scotland, Hereford and later in transforming the Cotswold Approved School into a therapeutic community called the Cotswold Community (Q Camps 2009). Other therapeutic communities such as Millbrook Grange, New Barns, the Priory and Thornfield developed

Therapeutic Communities are designed as psychologically informed planned environments, places where the mix of social relationships, structure of the

day and different activities are all deliberately designed to help children and young people's health and well-being. Children and young people with various longstanding emotional problems spend time and engage in therapy together in an organised and structured way, without drugs or self-damaging behaviour, so that a new life in outside society is made possible.

In the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s a number of therapeutic communities could be found throughout the UK, the influence of Maslow's ideas of needs was influential in their development (Soyez & Broekaert 2005). However, changes in thinking compromised these communities, and there developed an assumption that these communities were about the free expression of negative feeling through destructive actions. Of course this is not the case as the movement originates with pioneers who emphasised essential elements of containment for example setting of boundaries and encouraging people to face and take responsibility for their own actions (Cole and Pritchard 2007).

By the end of the 1980's there was less support for the model because of a change of thinking. Families and children not wanting to be separated for such long periods and the cost of this type of provision, number of places offered to children and young people led to a decline in the use of this approach. Children and young people who would have benefited from this model are the most fragile, the most traumatised, those with the most complex issues are not having their needs met in the current models available and now struggle to access education and develop the social skills needed to become effective adults in their communities. Many are now placed in the PRU.

### **1.7 *Growth of EBD Schools in England***

The 1944 Education Act placed a duty on LEAs to identify and research who the maladjusted were and to meet their educational needs. The recognition of the term 'maladjusted' as an educational handicap was, at the time, considered to be a great step forward and seen as an attempt at positive change. The 1981 Education Act dropped the term 'maladjusted' in favour of 'emotional and behavioural difficulties' (EBD).

In 1947 there were 139 children and young people in EBD schools, one of which was a day school, four others boarding schools. By the mid 1960's figures show a steep increase, although boarding schools still outnumbered day schools (Cole, Visser, and Daniels 1998). The model of the schools, varied although the better schools embraced the therapeutic approaches and theoretical frame works. The national survey of provision by Wilson and Evans (1980) found most schools believed in a caring and educational approach that boosted pupil self esteem, without relying heavily on any particular theory. Cole, Visser, and Daniels (1998) national study found most EBD schools again borrowed from various theories for example ideas used in therapeutic communities and EBD schools, seeing the value of behaviourist systems of rewarding desired actions as well as the value of counselling and relationship building.

### **1.8 *Early Tutorial Classes***

The history of the educational provision for children and young people with SEBD is not only made up of boarding and day schools. The 'off-site' unit has existed for at least half a century. The 1944 Education Act recognised that there were students who found mainstream education difficult and who resorted to, or could not help, disrupting lessons in that environment. Educationalists were aware that there were not enough special schools for those deemed as maladjusted. Also, parents sometimes did not want their children being sent away to boarding schools (Underwood Report, Min of Ed. 1955). Educationalists were pleased to consider and to back community-based alternatives.

One community-based approach was the Tutorial Class and in 1950 the first Tutorial Classes opened in London. This model can probably be seen as the forebear of the PRUs of today. Units were deliberately placed off mainstream school sites. Students attended them for half of the week, returning to mainstream schooling for the other half. Teachers from the units were allocated time to work with the parents. The Education Minister was pleased and praised the approach of teaching the maladjusted child at home as part of the child's family (Cole and Pritchard 2007).

From the off-site tutorial classes, many hundreds of special units developed in the 1970s and the 1980s (see Elton Report, *Discipline in Schools*, DES, 1989, Cole and Pritchard 2007). There were however concerns about the 'sin-bin', dumping-ground associations with these special units, Lord Elton and colleagues were clear that future off-site units should have a purpose to:

*'Re-integrate pupils into the mainstream at the earliest possible stage or to begin procedures for statementing. They should be run by members of the support team...They would offer a breathing space, specialist diagnosis and an individually tailored programme aimed at reintegration.'*  
(DES, 1989, p157)

### **1.9 Thoughts**

I found myself reflecting on whether the difficulties I experienced researching how society educated our children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties were representative of our commitment to an appropriate education for these children and young people? I think it might be.

Much of what I found in the literature only discussed provision for those children from financially disadvantaged families, from the 'Charity School developed in the seventeenth century by the gentry and wealthy townsmen to the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and the establishment of 'Workhouses'. To me this suggests that society, at the time, perceived only the children of the poor to be challenging to society, or to be described in today's language as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. However, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties then and now are classless. Today children and young people who challenge society are described as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. I was unable find any literature in my search to suggest that, in our history, children and young people from a more secure financial background were perceived as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, or seen to be challenging to society. However, this did begin to change, when thinking began to develop in the 1920s and 1930s. I believe during the 1920s and 1930s there developed a closer parallel between the children of rich and the poor. Thinking was beginning to

recognise that children and young people were 'not born' bad but that external influences created the problems. Montessori, Froebel and Steiner were influential at this point of development with their pioneering approaches in child-centred teaching practice as were the approaches used in therapeutic community schools. The core of the philosophy of this new approach was the belief that all children and young people were not born wayward or bad but that the difficulties that children and young people develop are made so by external influences (Cole and Pritchard 2007). This philosophy was and is particularly evident in Therapeutic Communities, it is also something that some key stakeholders see in the more successful PRU head teacher.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE ESTABLISHMENTS OF PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS**

### **2.1 *Introduction***

The most important development in meeting the education needs of children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties occurred as a result of the 1944 Education Act. This was the first time that children and young people with SEBD were recognised as needing special education provision, albeit under the guise of the label 'maladjustment'. The 1944 Education Act defined the maladjusted as: '...pupils who show evidence of emotional instability or psychological disturbance...' (Ministry of Education 1953). There is a clear period of development in the education for children and young people with SEBD to the 1990's and the development of PRUs. The next stage was to bridge that gap in my knowledge and understanding of the development and purpose of the Pupil Referral Unit.

There is a history of discussion and consideration of children and young people who are now described as having SEBD, and where these children and young people should be educated. Cole, Visser and Upton (1998) describe how behaviour that challenges today's society was present in Victorian times. Since those times a range of 'help' or provision has been offered to support those that did not 'fit' into the mainstream of society. That provision was offered through welfare systems (e.g. workhouses, Poor Law schools, and Barnardo's homes), the justice system (e.g. reformatory schools and approved schools) health (e.g. asylums for the feeble-minded / immoral / defective and family therapy) and finally education (schools for maladjusted, residential / day schools and EBD support in mainstream). However, many children and young people were lost from the system and received no education (OfSTED 1993).

The 1993 Education Act placed a duty on LEAs to make educational provision for children and young people who, for whatever reason, were 'out of school'. The policy on Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) was initiated in the early 1990s. Section 19(2) and Schedule 1 of the 1996 Education Act is the primary legislation concerning PRUs. The DfES Circular 11/94 (DfES 1994) states

that PRUs are places of education, and more specifically that they are a 'new type of school'. PRUs became one way in which LEAs could discharge their duties in supporting students who were permanently excluded from mainstream school because of difficult and disruptive behaviour.

## **2.2 Literature Review**

This section of the research analyses literature which review provision for students in units, which, in turn initiated the development of PRUs. Literature also included reasons and justification for creating PRUs. Research methods are discussed, differences between qualitative and quantitative methods highlighted and the validity of using a literature review or a survey of literature as an appropriate research method is discussed.

While government guidance and HMI inspector reports form a major part of reviewed material, academic literature is also reviewed. However, only material that has a clear focus on the concerns and issues relating to the development of PRUs and the quality of educational support provided in PRUs was considered. Focus was achieved through addressing the following questions

- What is a PRU?
- When were PRUs created?
- Why were PRUs created?
- What is known about the nature of practice of PRUs?
- What are the outcomes of evaluation studies of PRUs?

The main aim of this stage of my research was to analyse and survey the literature that had impacted on PRUs, consider the introduction of PRUs, the role of PRUs and reports that discussed the quality of provision offered by PRUs.

Useful and pertinent information was extracted from a variety of sources ranging from journal articles, academic internet websites, and media articles to government guidance. The survey resulted in an evaluative report of information found in the literature relating to the introduction of PRUs. The overall approach to collating literature for this review reflected the belief that



different methodologies would allow for exploring breadth in research, therefore literature surveyed was drawn from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

A wide-ranging search was employed to collect data, from academic libraries, media libraries and internet websites. Key journals were reviewed including *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* published by SEBDA, *The British Journal of Learning Support* published by NASEN, and electronic databases such as ERIC, ATHENS, Google, Google Academic and Ask Jeeves. Search terms used included “PRUs”, “pupil referral units”, “off-site units”, “behaviour units”, “education for students with EBD”, “history of education” and “special education”. Material was selected only if it had a clear link to PRUs or provision for students outside mainstream education. A systematic review of literature was carried out. I also located chapters of interest, scanned references cited in academic indexes and further reviewed these references.

The review identified that although there were many reports on the education of students with learning or behaviour difficulties, few could be found that directly reviewed the development of PRUs or the standards of provision available for students outside mainstream education before the development of PRUs. This resulted in government guidance and HMI inspector reports forming a major part of material reviewed. Material reviewed provided both quantitative and qualitative information about students attending PRUs.

Resources I used to address research questions were:

- *What is a PRU:* Government websites, ESTYN and OfSTED, websites, Circulars;
- *When were PRUs created:* Government websites, 1993 Education Act, 1996 Education Act, DfE (1994b), Fisher (1996);
- *Why were PRUs created:* OfSTED (1993), Academic literature e.g. Cole, Visser and Daniels (1998), Law (1998) and Fisher (1996);
- *What is known about the nature of practice of PRUs:* OfSTED (1995), Estyn Reports, OfSTED Reports, Media library e.g. Sunday Times (1996), DfE (1994b);

- *What are the outcomes of evaluation studies of PRUs:* OfSTED reports, Estyn inspection reports, academic literature.

Academic literature in this field was limited; little is written outside of government publications about the role and development of PRUs.

### **2.3 The Introduction of the PRU**

At the same time as the introduction of the national curriculum and the league tables to mainstream schools there was a huge increase in the number of students who were excluded from mainstream schools between 1990 and 1994 (Fisher 1996). In England alone those numbers rose from 3,000 in 1990 each year up to 11,000 1994, with an estimate of up to 12,000 during the 1995-1996 school year. during this period there was also the intrducion of the National Curriculum and league tables. This brought concerns that many young people were not being offered effective education and not being offered the same opportunities as their peers in mainstream schools.

‘Off-site units’ were traditionally used for supporting students who were permanently excluded from mainstream schools and for those students who were long term non-attenders. In the 1970s these ‘off-site units’ grew in great numbers, particularly in London. ‘Off-site units’ were used as a tool by some LEAs to manage educational provision for students ‘with difficulties’ outside of mainstream schools (Topping 1983). This practice continued up until the early 1990s. However, these units were unregulated – they were generally established as responses to the perceived needs of the local area.

*“....special units portray a wide range of different intentions. For example, ‘exclusion centres’ and ‘adjustment groups’ would seem to have primarily a disciplinary purpose while the title of ‘guidance’ ‘diagnostic’ and ‘assessment’ units imply a clinical role. In some situations the units provide sanctuary and are so named, in others they provide what is first and foremost an education programme and are identified by terms such as*

*'tutorial centre', individual work unit' and 'tuition unit'.* (Lloyd Smith p3)

In England OfSTED (1993) carried out a review of pupils' behaviour in schools between 1990 and 1992. As part of the review Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) visited 31 primary schools, 18 secondary schools and 39 'off-site units' in over 10 LEAs. Each of the units had a different structure of provision. Some units catered only for Key Stage 4 students whereas others catered for students from all key stages. The majority of the referrals to the 'off-site units' were for students who were difficult or disruptive and whose behaviour caused problems for their schools. I believe that the report was a significant document in the development of PRUs.

The findings from the Report 'pulled no punches' and were damning. The Report found that in most of the units, students did not work well or reach good standards of achievement. The quality of work in most of the units "lacked clear purpose and challenge; intellectual stimulus was weak and the work was well below pupils' age and ability" (OfSTED 1993 p. 5). In almost 50% of the units, major deficiencies were found in standards of work. These deficiencies were reported to be the result of lack of planning, unclear objectives and work poorly matched to the ability of the students attending the units.

However, the review did see some examples of students who worked well and reached good standards but this was only reported to be found in 'a few units' (OfSTED 1993 p.5). The Report highlighted features that contributed to these better examples. For example, teachers providing students with close personal attention but not over-directing, teachers encourage students to take some responsibility for identifying what they needed to learn. These, of course, are examples of 'working in partnership'; a strategy widely used in classrooms today where good teaching and learning is observed.

Teachers' attitudes to teaching and learning were reported to be poor, teaching and learning was slow and teachers did little to challenge students'

casual approach to learning. It was reported that teachers' low expectations of their students were seen as a significant factor of poor standards of work and students behaviour. Many staff working in the units were reported to believe that the students attending the units had already failed so why set them up to fail again. The Report stated that teachers low expectations led to the downfall of most of the units reported on and resulted in students responding to these low expectations. Students achieved what staff expected them to – the Report (OfSTED 1993) suggested that low expectations from staff were reflected in poor student behaviour, poor attendance and unacceptable standards of teaching and learning.

It was reported however that, throughout all units visited, generally 'staff established good relationships with individual pupils' (OfSTED 1993:5). However, it was reported that these relationships seldom placed emphasis on students' access to a broad and balanced curriculum and probably only sufficed to produce appeasement in the classroom, resulting in an easy life in the classroom for staff.

Other aspects reviewed by the team of HMI included standards of assessment, recording and reporting and again these standards varied. Some units had thorough systems for recording and reporting student academic and behaviour achievement. Other units focused heavily on behaviour issues and therefore 'assessment practices were crude and embryonic' (OfSTED 1993:7)

When reflecting on outcomes of this report, particularly outcomes that highlight poor teaching and learning, poor quality of planning, assessment and recording, it is difficult to accept the findings in the report that units were staffed by 'experienced teachers' (OfSTED 1993:7). A question that needs to be raised here is what the report meant by 'experienced teachers'? Are those teachers experienced at developing and offering supportive relationships with disruptive and disaffected students (which is reported as a 'strength of the units') or teachers who are experienced in terms of 'teaching and learning',

although teaching and learning is criticised. This is conflicting information and does little to make clear what is really expected from staff working in PRUs.

The quality of teaching was clearly an issue in this report. However, there were some reported examples of how some opportunities for staff in terms of development, training or support from advisers was offered. The report (OfSTED 1993) describes how some units did provide opportunities for in-service courses but it is unclear what quality and length of in-service training was offered. This query is supported by the report findings that many teachers had not received appropriate training or advice and that most teachers had not received basic National Curriculum training. This lack of training, advice, support and isolation would naturally lead to findings that suggested standards, in all areas, would generally be well below what is acceptable.

The report makes clear that 'units' needed to develop in terms of curricular plans, develop better teaching methods and strategies and raise teacher expectations of student achievement. Finally the report suggested that staff and students 'occupied an ambiguous legal twilight zone' (OfSTED 1993) students were poorly served educationally and teaching staff were isolated. All of which affects the development and quality of educational achievement.

In conclusion, the OfSTED (1993) Report states that 'units' need to work more closely with schools and other services so that they benefit from their expertise. These links will help 'upgrade' what the 'units' are offering. The findings from this Report suggested there was no alternative but for legislation to be put in place to safeguard both students attending the units and staff working in them.

A review of provision in Wales at this time was not carried out. However, a review of educational provision in Wales did take place during 1994-95 (OHMCI 1996). The report made no reference to PRUs in Wales or any 'off-site provision'. When reporting on 'behaviour, discipline and attendance' the reported stated:

*“...in some classes the progress of all pupils is hindered by the low-level but persistent and irritating disruption caused by a small minority”*  
(OHMCI 1996: 23)

After reading the report, ‘*Review of Educational Provision in Wales 1994-1995*’, it was clear to me that there appeared to be a lack of information on permanently excluded students or those students struggling with attendance. The Report did not highlight any statistics or discuss any issues relating to behaviour, discipline or attendance of provision outside of mainstream schooling i.e. off-site units.

## **2.4 Legislation for Pupil Referral Units**

The Education Act 1993 placed a duty on LEAs to make educational provision for children and young people who were, for whatever reason, out of school. As a result new provision was developed and became known as Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). The PRUs became one way in which LEAs fulfilled their responsibility to this group of students.

Section 19(2) and Schedule 1 of the Education Act 1996 is the primary legislation on PRUs. DFE Circular 11/94 stated that PRUs are places of education. More clearly the Education Act 1996 state that PRUs are a ‘new type of school’ and are one way in which LEAs can discharge their new duties in supporting students who are permanently excluded from mainstream school. Circular 11/94 is careful not to ‘guide’ LEAs too much and states that LEAs are not required to establish PRUs.

Section 4 of the Education Act 1993 defines a ‘school’ as an educational establishment that is not further education or higher education which is providing for primary or secondary age students. Following the Education Act 1993 and a change of pace in law, the 1996 Education Act came into force. The OfSTED (1993) report has to be seen as the conception of PRUs and the 1996 Act as the birthing, albeit difficult. The 1996 Act re-enacted the 1993 Act. In effect the 1996 Act adopted the same approach as The 1993 Act. The Education Act 1996 required that these units operate with greater clarity, with a need for the role of these units to be clear and that the curriculum offered to

students should have more purpose (Parsons 1995). The 1993 Act reshaped these units by naming them for the first time PRUs and providing guidance and boundaries. The 1993 Act therefore took on board the findings of the OfSTED (1993) report and moved the 'units' forward, providing opportunities for LEAs and teachers to improve the quality of provision for the most 'demanding and needy' students. OfSTED believed that these units varied in a number of ways, most importantly in the quality of provision. There was a continuum of provision ranging from good to very poor.

Law (1998) suggested that with the creation of PRUs, it would be tempting to look at PRUs as an evolution of earlier EBD provision. However Law (1998) believes this would not be a valid assumption and therefore PRUs should be seen as a 'new kind of entity'.

PRUs have developed into a widely used educational provision or 'school' for students who are disaffected and disruptive. Legislation has been developed to support the management of such 'schools'. I believe that describing PRUs as an 'entity' is reasonable in that there is now a name for 'off-site units'. However, these units did not magically appear. They were the development of a provision, albeit a poorly judged provision, which was being used nationally for supporting the majority of students permanently excluded from mainstream education and therefore not something 'new'.

To recap: a PRU is not a mainstream school or a special school but is a new type of school. Law's (1998 p.98) suggestion that '*PRUs have no real pedigree and their parentage is mongrel*' appears to be supported in the 'legal' description of what a PRU is; legally a school but not a school.

## **2.5 Initial Guidance for Pupil Referral units**

In England guidance for PRUs was introduced in 1999, Department for Education Circulars 10/99 and 11/99. In Wales The National Assembly for Wales (WAG) Circular 3/99. In its introduction for guidance on the legal aspects and *Building Excellent Schools Together (BEST)* practice for pupil

support and social inclusion, states that raising standards and addressing underachievement in education is at the heart of Government policy.

The introduction of this document makes clear that raising standards '*applies to all children including those who are socially excluded*' (OHMC 1996). A sound statement, however, many staff that I have spoken to working in PRUs, felt that having to include the students that are socially excluded in the sentence suggests that they are generally not included. What this means is that students who are socially excluded, i.e. students being educated in PRUs, are 'all children'. Therefore, it is not appropriate to establish them as different by creating a sentence that suggests that professionals may not see them as a part of 'all children'.

Similarities between a PRU and a mainstream or special school are that they must have a SEN policy and appropriate Child Protection procedures. Other similarities, although not highlighted in Circular 3/99, should include appropriate educational opportunities and challenges for all students.

To simplify the role and status of the PRU, Circular 3/99 highlights five key differences between PRUs and schools:

*1. Governing Bodies:* PRUs have a Management Committee and not a Governing Body; it is recommended that the Management Committee have up to thirteen members but no less than seven. The guidance suggests that members of the Committee should come from a wide spectrum including officers from the LEA who have experience of working with students with behaviour difficulties, officers from social service departments and the health authority. The main role of the Management Committee within the support and development of the PRU is:

- Admissions
- Attendance
- Discipline
- Curriculum
- Post-inspection action



However, it does not make clear how these officers are canvassed to become members. For example, a school Governing Body has members who actively seek to be involved with the development of a school and its pupils and do so in a voluntary capacity. It is unclear if the 'role/job' of a Management Committee member becomes part of an officer's job description or that members 'volunteer' their time to the Committee. This raises a question of motivation and commitment in this important role.

*2. Registration:* Students can be dually registered. This means that a student can remain on the roll of a mainstream school whilst attending the PRU.

*3. Staffing:* In terms of staffing, the 'teacher-in-charge' of the PRU is for legal purposes, a head teacher, although this title is not usually offered. The role does however give the 'teacher-in-charge / head teacher' the autonomy to take necessary action in situ. Also teachers, as in mainstream schools, must be qualified. However, the guidance does state that 'teachers' can also be suitably qualified instructors, although it is not clear what is meant by 'suitably'. Teachers in their induction year, licensed or student teachers should not be employed in PRUs. The guidance does however, suggest that 'supply teachers' can offer support to PRUs. This mixed message is causing some problems. For example responses to a question raised in the Times Educational Supplement (TES 2004) website, '*NQTs; Got any problems in your first year teaching?*' Some NQTs are employed by LEAs as supply teachers and are working in PRUs but are not able to complete their induction year in the PRU. If the LEA supports the use of supply teachers in PRUs, and NQTs are often supply teachers, this is sending conflicting messages to staff working in PRUs. This is not supportive and leads to further low self-esteem amongst teaching staff. A reasonable question to raise at this point, is why it would be appropriate to employ an instructor in a PRU but not a qualified teacher? It is of course acceptable to suggest that an NQT may experience difficulties because of lack of classroom experience. However, an instructor, regardless of how much 'experience' they may have, would not have 'experienced' appropriate training in terms of curricular planning, assessment, recording and reporting; if they had they would be a qualified teacher.

4. *Curriculum*: Because of the nature of the PRU in terms of size and possible movement of students the guidance suggests that it would be difficult to offer the full National Curriculum. However, PRUs should offer a balanced and broadly based curriculum (paragraph 6 (2) of Schedule 1 to the 1996 Act) which is to promote spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of the students attending a PRU as well as preparing students for opportunities, responsibilities, experiences and expectations of adult life and the world of work.

5. *Premises*: Although PRUs are subject to the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1996, the guidance does refer to 'modifications' in terms of PRUs. What this means is PRUs do not have to meet certain requirements: for example, they do not have to meet requirements for playing fields, or for providing a head teachers' office or staff accommodation for both work and social purposes.

Law (1998) describes how on the one hand PRUs were created as a result of a movement or drive by both HMI and government. There was a drive to put a stop to or to regulate 'off-site EBD day units', which were plentiful. The drive was to stop 'off-site EBD day units' from working outside of a legal framework, when these units were working outside a legal framework they were not registered and therefore had no formal existence. However I believe that the 'drive' was necessary and moral.

On the other hand, these new 'types of school' or PRUs, which in many situations were the 'old' off-site EBD units, were being described by the Secretary of State as the answer to the management of difficult and disruptive students.

It seems reasonable to question the differing 'descriptions' of reasons for creating PRUs. On the one hand there were questions about quality and standard of the provision of 'off-site units' but on the other hand these poor quality units were renamed over night and became the new 'experts' for dealing with the most difficult students. Instead of support being offered for

the development of provision for disaffected students, suggestions that they were being 'being set up to fail' seemed more valid. For example it was not long before PRUs were renamed 'sin-bins'; a term used often by the media.

*"Two years ago the government set up 300 Pupil Referral Units – Sin Bins, the idea is that one to one teaching of the most difficult children should rehabilitate them..... in some eyes they are colleges of crime"* (Sunday Times, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1996).

Even local newspapers picked up on the label 'sin-bins'. A letter to a popular news paper suggested that creating more 'sin-bins' was not the answer to working with students with EBD, as they lead to students becoming worse than before attending the PRU (George. 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1999).

The tone used in these articles does nothing to reflect the reason for developing PRUs. We are told that the reason was to raise standards of education and opportunities for students who struggled in mainstream school, and who often had Special Educational Needs Statements. The articles were negative and suggested negative connotations of PRUs, a question that will be reflected on later in this study.

This language is not lost on the staff working in PRUs, teachers in mainstream schools or other professionals. For staff in PRUs it undermines their work and professional commitment. For others including teachers working in mainstream schools it creates a misunderstanding of the role of staff working in PRUs. It creates misunderstanding of the purpose of PRUs and their status within the educational structure.

Ten years after the creation of the PRU, their role is still questioned and often misunderstood. That misunderstanding is most often evident within the teaching profession. The misunderstanding is at all levels and leads to frustration, ignorance and, in some situations, fear of professional isolation. I have been reminded by a number of staff working in PRUs that the words

'fearing isolation' suggests something that could happen - more often staff already experience isolation.

PRUs were created to support those students who struggled to manage in mainstream schooling because of SEBD. These difficulties are recognised in paragraph 2:1 of the 1994 *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (The Code)*. Within mainstream schools exists 'special provision': mainstream schools with specialist education, including specialist education for children with social and emotional difficulties. According to *Circular 3/99 'Social Inclusion: Pupil Support'* a child permanently excluded from a special school should not be placed in a PRU. This is reported to be a concern for PRUs with increased numbers of students attending PRUs who have been permanently excluded from special schools. PRUs were not developed or introduced to be a substitute for the EBD Special School or the Specialist Therapeutic Schools, however many students with these special needs are being placed in the PRU therefore changing the role.

## **2.6 SEN Students Attending Pupil Referral Units**

The 1993 Education Act (The 1993 Act) required the Secretary of State, who at the time was John Patten, to issue a Code of Practice (The Code) on the identification and assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN). The Code came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1994. The purpose of the Code of Practice was to give practical guidance to LEAs on the discharge of their duties under Part IV of the Education Act 1996.

Part III of The 1993 Act provided practical support and guidance about roles and responsibilities for LEAs and governing bodies. Within the foreword of The Code, it was estimated that at one time or another up to 20% of students will have SEN. However, Rimmer (1998) suggests that these figures could be between 20% and 40% of the school population.

Friel (1997) describes how the 1993 Act provided a better system for parents and students with SEN suggesting that reforms and changes that were introduced in the 1993 Act offered parents and organisations supporting

parents, and students with SEN, a much fairer deal than any previous legislation. What this meant is that parents and students were being given rights, and LEAs responsibilities, in supporting students with SEN.

Students with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) are part of the continuum of SEN. Paragraph 2:1 of the Code defines students with EBD as having SEN. The Code states that those students, with EBD, may fail to achieve the expectations of mainstream schools, and in some cases disrupt the education of other students.

According to Circular 3/99 a child permanently excluded from a special school should not be placed in a PRU, although advice on children with statements excluded from mainstream school is decidedly more vague. The Code does state that a PRU should not be regarded as a permanent provision (paragraph 7.25). At KS1 and 2 students should be reintegrated into mainstream school within one term – but no such guidance exists for secondary students. The guidance though is clear that a PRU would not normally be named on a statement of SEN (paragraph 7.25).

However, there is a legal case – *P versus City and County of Swansea 2000* that states, although exceptional, it is lawful to name a PRU as an appropriate school for children with SEN. The educational provision identified in a SEN Statement is the 'school' that supports the students' educational needs in the longer term. Law (1998) states clearly that PRUs are distinctive in that they are defined as a short-term intervention. What this means is that students should remain in a PRU for a short period of time and should then be re-integrated into a mainstream or special school. However in the *P versus City and County of Swansea 2000* case it was successfully argued that the PRU was the best educational provision for the student and the PRU was named in the Statement of SEN where previously it was a 'school' be identified in the statement, suggesting the placement in the PRU would not be short term.

This was an issue raised by delegates during the 2004 National Organisation for Pupil Referral Units (NofPRUs) National Conference, it was agreed that

generally PRU staff accept the naming of a PRU for students at KS4 but there is concern that this practice does not happen for students at KS3 and below. At KS4 students need continuity in their external examination years and if a PRU is able to offer external examination opportunities then it is more appropriate for a student to have a long stay in the PRU. However, for younger students it is essential that there is a clear commitment to support these students to return to mainstream. Without this commitment it may be easy for students to be left in the PRU system and miss opportunities their peers have had offered to them. Another major concern for delegates was the difficulties associated with mixing students with different support needs. Delegates were clear that placing students with Statements of SEN continued to be a problem causing difficulties for staff and the students.

With the change of pace, the SEN Code of Practice (the new Code), which was effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2002, supersedes the Code of Practice (1994). This revised (or new) SEN Code of Practice retains a lot of the guidance offered in the original Code. However, it considers the experience LEAs have developed in using the 1994 Code of Practice; it also includes the new rights and duties introduced by the SEN Disability Act 2001.

In terms of students being educated in Wales, the Welsh Language Act 1993 has a fundamental principle 'that the Welsh and English language should be treated on the basis of equality in the provision of services to the public in Wales'. What this means is that children, young people and their families whose first language is Welsh have the right to have services organised in the language that they are most comfortable with so that their progress is not hindered. This of course also applies to children, young people and their families whose first language is English.

There are some changes from the original SEN Code of Practice. For example, the new Code considers the Disability Act 2001. From September 2002, schools, which include PRUs, will be required not to treat disabled pupils less favourably for a reason relating to their disability. Changes include a stronger right for children and young people with SEN to be educated in a

mainstream school (these of course include students with EBD) and that LEAs must provide services that offer advice and information to children and parents in support of resolving disputes with the LEA.

Reviews of provision for students with SEN took place in England and Wales. ESTYN published a report in 2003 and OfSTED in 2004. ESTYN (2003) made no reference to PRUs but did recommend that students with 'social, emotional and behavioural problems need better support' (ESTYN 2003 p17). OfSTED did report on PRUs and stated there was an increase in the number of students with SEN being placed in PRUs. Both reports discussed the need for appropriate staff training. An issue for the support of students with an SEN statement is that of the curriculum. Statemented students' should have access to the National Curriculum. Circular 3/99 identifies the curriculum as a key difference between PRUs and mainstream schools, because of the nature of the PRUs, they do not have to offer the National Curriculum but should offer a balanced and broadly based curriculum (paragraph 6 (2) of Schedule 1 to the 1996 Act). This means that students with SEN statements will immediately be disadvantaged in PRUs and not have their full entitlement.

If a PRU that is supporting students with SEN statements is inspected and the PRU is not able to offer the full curriculum, which Circular 3/99 establishes the PRU cannot, the PRU is still judged as failing to meet the educational needs of their students.

## **2.7 Data on PRUs**

In reviewing the development of PRUs it is also important to reflect on the data presented on PRUs. Data can offer many opportunities in terms of understanding or interpreting trends or changes in national standards within an institution or organisation. Quality of information gathered and statistics available from PRUs varies. Statistics on PRUs managed in England offers 'rich pickings', whereas in Wales information is limited.

How information is gathered from PRUs mirrors that of information gathered from all other schools. The process of gathering statistics in England and

Wales is carried out each January via three statistical forms known as STATS 1, STATS 2 and STATS 3. Each of the forms collects specific information. STATS 1 collects pupil and teacher numbers as well as aspects of school organisation, this form is also referred to as Pupil Level Annual Schools' Census (PLASC). STATS 2 provide information about special education provision and STATS 3 about teachers employed by the LA.

For many PRUs in Wales this has been a difficult process as much of this information is gathered electronically via the School Information Management System (SIMS), which is used in all LEAs. A large percentage of PRUs in Wales have not had access to these resources. The STATS 1 form has been available in hard copy so some information has been available. However, in January 2008 it became compulsory for all data to be collected electronically (National Assembly for Wales 2004a). This increased data on PRUs will provide excellent opportunities for research into trends within this sector of education, reflecting on students attending registered PRUs, student economic background, ethnic background, special needs and staffing trends. However, Wales is still struggling to collect data electronically. In Wales the STATS 1 form is still produced in paper form, this remains the case for data being collected in 2009.

Even with these difficulties there is government statistical information presented that allows analyses of registered PRUs in Wales. However, in making comparisons with, for example, English registered PRUs, the information is limiting. Information where comparisons or discussions can take place is with the growth of PRUs and students with Statements of Special Education Needs attending PRUs.

The first ESTYN PRU inspection in Wales took place in spring 1998. At that time there were 23 registered PRUs (National Assembly for Wales 2004b). Statistical information for 2003-2004 shows that there was a 30% increase in the number of registered PRUs bringing figures to 31. The story is the same in England, registered PRUs increasing from 286 to 360, a 26% increase (OfSTED 2004a).



The sharpest increase has been the number of students attending PRUs. In Wales between 1998 and 2004 the number of students who are solely registered in PRUs increased from 299 to 427, almost a 46% increase (National Assembly for Wales 2004b). These figures represent students solely registered in PRUs.

Figures in England show an apparent substantial increase from approximately 5,000 to over 12,000 students attending registered PRUs. What is not clear is how these figures have been reported, are these figures for solely registered students or those students both dually and solely registered?

PRU guidance discusses the placement of students with Statements of SEN in PRUs; they should not attend a PRU. Circular 3/99 is clear that primary students should be integrated into a mainstream school within one term, that pupils excluded from Special Schools (a child or young person must have a Statement of SEN to attend a Special School) should not be placed at a PRU and that PRUs should not be regarded as a permanent provision for students with SEN. Statistics show however, that within the population of students with statements of SEN attending PRUs, the percentage is increasing. In Wales figures show that the percentage of students with statements who attend PRUs has grown from nil in the early 90s to 0.7% of today's population. This percentage represents 427 students who are solely registered and 621 who are dually registered (National Assembly for Wales 2004b). In England the trend is similar; currently 17.6% of students attending PRUs in England have a statement (DfES 2004).

A deeper analysis (in terms of SEN students attending PRUs) of this data is not possible. For example the data does not provide information about how long these students are placed at PRUs or if they were placed at the PRU as a result of exclusion from a Special School. However, statistics do show that over a period of less than a decade the number of registered PRUs in Wales has increased by 30% with a 26% increase in England. Special Schools on the other hand have decreased in numbers in both England and Wales. This information, alongside statistics inform us that there are increased number of

students, including those with statements of SEN, being placed in PRUs. Does this suggest that PRUs are being used by LEAs to plug gaps in the education system? Is this intentional behaviour or just a crisis management strategy that LEAs just find themselves in?

The quality of 'off-site' unit educational provision was, I believe, a major ingredient in the development of PRUs. The next chapter reflects on quality of PRUs using the views of the HMI.

## **CHAPTER THREE: MEASURING PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT QUALITY**

### **3.1 *Introduction***

The review of educational provision for students with SEBD in the 1990s reflected a renewed interest in raising standards. Prior to the OfSTED (1993) Report, students who caused management difficulties for mainstream schools often found themselves hidden away from 'protectors' of standards in units that were outside the boundaries of monitoring. The quality of educational support and expertise of staff was often a matter of luck rather than judgement. Even today it is not uncommon to find staff working with students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties with a 'child minder attitude'. As a result of concerns raised in 1993 a new 'school' was created. This new school works within a clear framework and has clear guidelines so that standards and opportunities for those students outside of the mainstream system are raised. PRUs have been in existence for a little over ten years; in that time PRUs have found a place in our education establishment. Being part of the educational framework means that there is a requirement for measuring and monitoring standards.

Development has now replaced this initial guidance in both England and Wales. In England, PRUs and Alternative Provision (2005) superseded Circular 10/99 and 11/99. This guidance will be superseded as a result of the Back on Track White Paper (2008). In Wales, Circular 47/2006 Inclusion and Pupil Support has updated premises guidance on PRUs in Wales. Circular 47/2006 attempt to create definition of a PRU, it describes the title PRU as a 'blanket term' (Annex 5.i p1). The guidance recognises that different authorities use different models of a PRU and that provision is developed to meet the needs of local circumstances and local policy. The National Behaviour and Attendance Review (2008) (NBAR) also raised questions about the role of the PRU, a recommendation of NBAR is that research be undertaken on the role of the PRU.

In summary, the main changes to previous guidance include:

- Adoption of the term 'Additional Learning Needs';

- Reflection on recent policy development including the Children Act 2004;
- Bringing attendance, behaviour and anti-bullying policies together;
- New attendance registration codes guidance on new provision under; the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003.

### **3.2 *First Inspections Post Creation of Pupil Referral Units***

During 1994-1995 small teams of HMIs inspected twelve PRUs in England. The PRUs were inspected under Section III of the Education Act 1992. These inspections were a pilot for the future use of the '*Framework for the Inspection of Schools*', which was being introduced during 1996-7 and prior to the tendering of future PRU inspections to registered inspectors in 1996. '*Pupil Referral Units: The first twelve inspections*' was published in 1995. The Report reminded us that the development of PRUs was at an early stage. However, the report did not make reference to the fact that these newly developed PRUs were mainly re-named failing 'off-site units' previously reviewed and reported on by OfSTED in 1993 (OfSTED 1993) in their 1993 report. OfSTED (1995) did though highlight that PRUs were diverse and that PRUs in each of the LEAs visited during the inspection differed.

OfSTED (1995a) identified a number of factors about the PRUs and the students attending them:

- if PRUs were attached to a Behavioural Support Service
- if PRUs and students were offered special support, for example to young mothers,
- the socio-economic background of students
- the age range of students

The Report also recognised that PRUs differed in terms of intake, organisation and the age group. The report identified PRUs that supported provision only for secondary students, PRUs that worked solely with primary students and PRUs that mixed the age ranges. The Report found that 68% of the students attending the PRUs inspected were KS4 age and predominantly boys.

The main findings of the Report were that standards were variable, generally being too low. Literacy, spoken and oracy, was of a poor standard and the overall quality of teaching in the PRUs was believed to be below that of mainstream schools. Teaching standards lacked the required quality for student improvement in attainment which would support reintegration into mainstream schools. The Report criticised the PRUs for lacking information about students' previous attainment. However, there were no comments about the mainstream schools not providing or forwarding information to PRUs.

On a more positive note the Report found that some students did respond positively to education in PRUs, and that student attendance and behaviour improved. There was no discussion as to whether these improvements were a result of any effort by the teaching staff only that the improvements were a result of the 'small group sizes'. Findings showed that staff did show concern for the difficulties their students faced, however, not sufficiently so as to see the need to improve student achievement. The Report did go on to describe how teachers struggled to cope with the diversity of needs of students they were teaching and suggested that improvement in attainment would only be possible when the *'intake is more clearly and narrowly defined'* (1995a:5). It is sensible to suggest at this stage that the diversity of student needs was a strong factor in the challenges of improving achievement. The diversities identified in the Report continue to exist today. When visiting PRUs in today's system it would not be unusual to see a wide spectrum of abilities and needs as highlighted in this early report.

These early PRU inspections almost mirrored comments made by OfSTED (1993). This is hardly surprising when these newly created PRUs were overwhelmingly just renamed 'off-site' units previously viewed as inadequate provision. Later ESTYN and OfSTED (Estyn 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003b, OfSTED 1999, 2004, 2005) Annual Inspection Reports identified some positive features in PRUs. Quality of teaching is reported to be improving although standards achieved by students are still a concern. Student behaviour, attendance and attitude to education also improved. However

there continued to be concerns about training opportunities for teachers in PRUs. These concerns have been present since the development of 'off-site units' used in the early 1990s to present day PRUs.

As a result of the '*Pupil Referral Units: The first twelve inspections*' in November 1995, a PRU Managers' Working Conference was held by Special Educational Needs Joint Initiative for Training (SENJIT). The conference discussed the framework for PRU inspections. Working groups looked at teaching, leadership and management, curriculum and reintegration. The conference was supported by PRU head teachers, who had experienced one of '*The first twelve inspected PRUs*' (OfSTED 1995). As a result a 'PRU Managers Guide to Inspection' was drafted. The guide was not intended to be a definitive guide for the PRU head teacher about to be inspected but it was hoped that it would be of use. OfSTED (1995b) *Inspecting Pupil Referral Units* was published. However, the 'The PRU Manager's Handbook' was difficult to locate as no official channel informed PRUs of its existence. I accessed 'The PRU Manager's Handbook' less than two months before my first PRU inspection, information from the handbook was supportive in preparation for the inspection. Many PRUs were isolated and LEAs were still struggling to understand the way forward for PRUs and with no national network of communication it was a matter of luck if PRUs discovered it. As a PRU Head in Wales I discovered the handbook by chance in 2000, a short time before my own PRU was inspected. Official guidance in Wales was published in Sept 2004, 'Guidance on the Inspection of Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units' (2004). This guidance was reviewed and updated in September 2008.

### **3.3 Later Inspections**

I have looked specifically at developments in Wales and England. Below I highlight findings from OfSTED and Estyn HMI Annual Reports covering 1998 to 2005. These reports focus on standards and quality in mainstream schools and Pupil Referral Units.

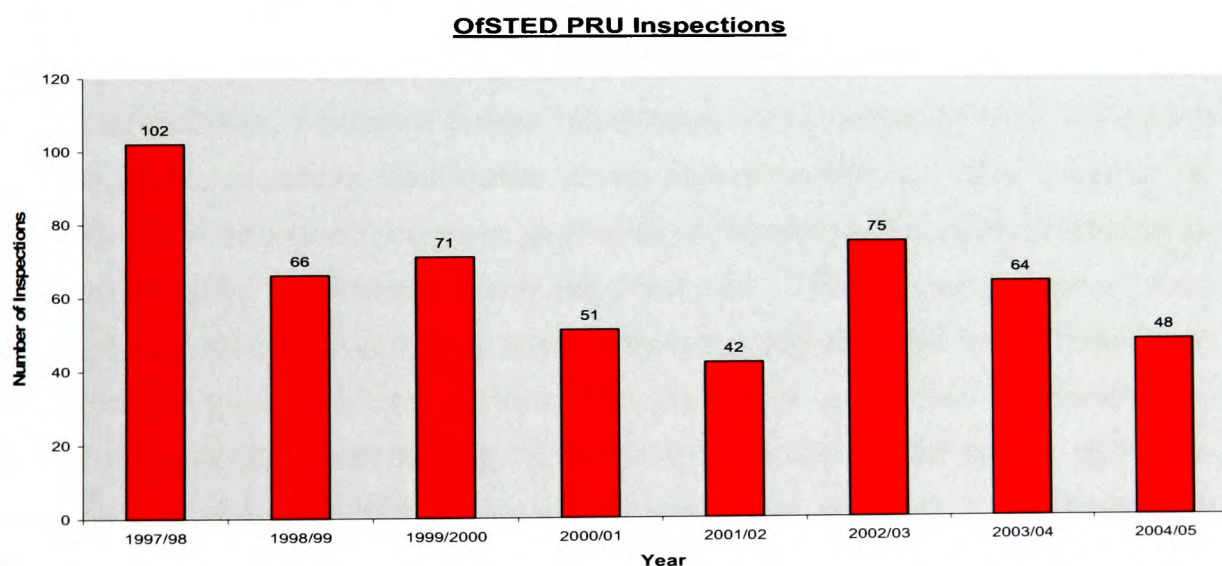
PRUs are established as schools under Section 10 of the Education Act 1996. This means that PRUs are included in the School Inspection Act 1996. Inspections are carried out by teams of inspectors, each led by a registered inspector. Section 10 of the 1996 Act, amended by the Education Act 2002 says that inspections must report on:

- The educational standards achieved by the school
- The quality of education provided by the school
- The quality of leadership and management of the school
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupil at the school.

### 3.4 *England*

The table below records the number of PRUs inspected in England over a nine year period, the largest inspected during 1997/1998 and the least number inspected during 2001-2002.

**Table 2** *Information source OfSTED (2005)*



To create continuity reporting on feedback from annual inspections of PRUs I have identified six areas of reported findings. Each area has been reported on annually and falls within the main role of the Management Committee in supporting and developing of PRUs. Areas I have discussed are:

- Standards achieved by students
- Discipline / behaviour and attitude

- Curriculum / accommodation and learning resources
- Quality of teaching
- Attendance
- Leadership and management

### Standards Achieved by Students

During the academic year 1998-1999 concerns continued to be raised about the attainment of students in PRUs. Attainment was reported to be below what was expected for the students' age, often significantly so. It was reported that students made better progress in English and Maths than Science and that there was evidence of increasing opportunities for pupils to achieve external examinations. During 1999-2000 most PRUs were making at least satisfactory progress. It was reported that 4 out of 10 PRUs were achieving good progress. Students continued to make better progress in English and Maths and signs of improvement in Science were seen. There was also an increase in the number of PRUs offering external examinations, in a small number of PRUs GCSEs were being offered. There were new concerns during 2000 – 2001, where it was reported that standards in PRUs were again below average. This was reported as being a result of previous school attendance. I believe it may have been more useful to have reviewed what progress students had made since attending PRUs. The majority of students still made good progress in English or Maths, although no references to achievements in Science were reported on. The following year it was reported that students in PRUs were achieving significantly better than was predicted by their previous school, this clearly is a marked improvement. During 2002-2003 again it was reported that in almost all pupils in PRUs attainment was below that expected for their age although progress in the PRUs in general was satisfactory. This does appear to be sending mixed messages to PRUs, a concern raised by staff since the development of PRUs.

### Behaviour and Attitude

All reports state that the majority of PRUs are successful in improving pupils' behaviour and attitude to learning. Reports are clear that improving behaviour and attitude to learning is a major focus for many of the PRUs and efforts



show success. This is one area in which the PRUs are achieving what was stated by the then Secretary of State, at the time of introducing PRUs, that PRUs would become the new 'experts' dealing with the most difficult young children and young people.

### Curriculum, Accommodation and Learning Resources

Over the whole period reviewed, the quality of the curriculum offered in the PRUs is reported to be satisfactory when facilities allow. Accommodation varies greatly and this affects the overall quality of curriculum offered. For example many PRUs do not have facilities for Sciences, Technology or PE and this in turn affects curriculum opportunities. During 1998-1999 it was reported that some PRUs did not have appropriate toilet facilities. Since 1998 there have been improvements in accommodation and resources, but accommodation continued to be a concern. However, what is clear is that the quality of curriculum offered is greatly affected by the accommodation and the availability of appropriate resources.

### Quality of Teaching

There was a marked improvement in the reported findings on the quality of teaching in PRUs since early inspections reported in OfSTED (1993) and OfSTED (1995b). With the reported use of more specialised subject teachers and behaviour specialists, the quality of teaching in the PRUs is generally reported as satisfactory and in some PRUs good. Monitoring of teaching is also improved although it was reported that five PRUs inspected were unsatisfactory (OfSTED 1995b). However, there is still a big step to take forward for PRU teachers with a need to professionalize the role of the PRU teacher. Training for PRU teachers in subject knowledge and behaviour management is clearly the way forward for PRU staff, this was a recommendation of early reports.

### Attendance

PRU attendance remains a concern and is reported to be lower than that of mainstream schools. However, it is reported that students attending PRUs attend better than they did at mainstream school. Many students attending

PRUs were referred because of attendance issues and their increased attendance at the PRU should be celebrated and not suggested as a failing (OfSTED 2005). Because of the nature of the students on roll at PRUs, it is not appropriate to make comparisons with mainstream schools. Expectations should not be lowered but should reflect the needs and issues of students at PRUs. For example, increasing a student's attendance from 10% or lower to 35% and above is a substantial step forward and should be reported as a success.

### Leadership and Management

The day-to day leadership and management in most PRUs is reported to be satisfactory and continues to improve. This was reported as a result of the work of the Head of Centre, Teacher-in-Charge or Head Teacher. However, there are reported shortcomings in the support and guidance offered by LEAs to PRUs. Where it was found that day-to-day leadership and management was not satisfactory this was attributed to inadequate support from LEAs. I believe this is significant in that any success in the day to day running of the PRU was perceived as the work of the Head, whereas when the day to day running of the PRU was reported as poor it was perceived as the result of poor support from the LA.

In summary, there have been clear developments in PRUs in England. Early reports highlighted concerns about student attainment but later there was reported progress. Student attitude and behaviour was improving in PRUs and attendance, although lower than that of mainstream school, was still showing improvement compared with previous school attendance records for students attending PRUs. There is a marked improvement in the reported findings of the quality of teaching in PRUs and the monitoring of teaching is also improving. The findings on leadership and management of PRUs continue to be reported as a concern. The relationship between PRUs and LEAs in England continued to cause difficulties for PRU staff. A recent survey held during the National Organisation for PRUs National Conference (2005) found that staff from LEAs rarely visited PRUs. Findings also suggested that LEA Officers, with the responsibility for linking with and supporting PRUs, had

little or no PRU experience and few had recent teaching experiences or experience of working with groups of students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

However, the burden for being responsible for poor leadership and management is heavy, and it was unclear how much information inspectors gathered in order to make the decision on who had that responsibility. I met with an OfSTED inspector and asked how an inspection team gathered information to make the judgement that poor leadership and management was the result of the PRU head teacher or the Management Committee. The Inspector reported that time is often very limited and this was one of the areas in which it is often difficult to gather solid evidence:

- *“...we often have to rely on what the head says about the support he or she gets from the management committee...in other areas of the inspection it is often so much easier to observe or gather statistics...we may look at produced documents but in honesty that really doesn't always tell us enough about who would be the main factor or reason for poor management of leadership...there are clear areas of responsibility in terms of managing financial resources if the budget is managed by the LEA and the head teacher has no role... also the head teacher can highlight lack of training etc but we don't have an opportunity to ask in depth any other key stakeholders...” (HMIa06)*

Clearly, there will be times when responsibility for poor leadership and management are easily attributed. Questions asked and evidence collated by the inspection team will look at leadership and management for PRU head teachers and leadership and management for the Management Committee. However, the avenue for gathering evidence is very limited.

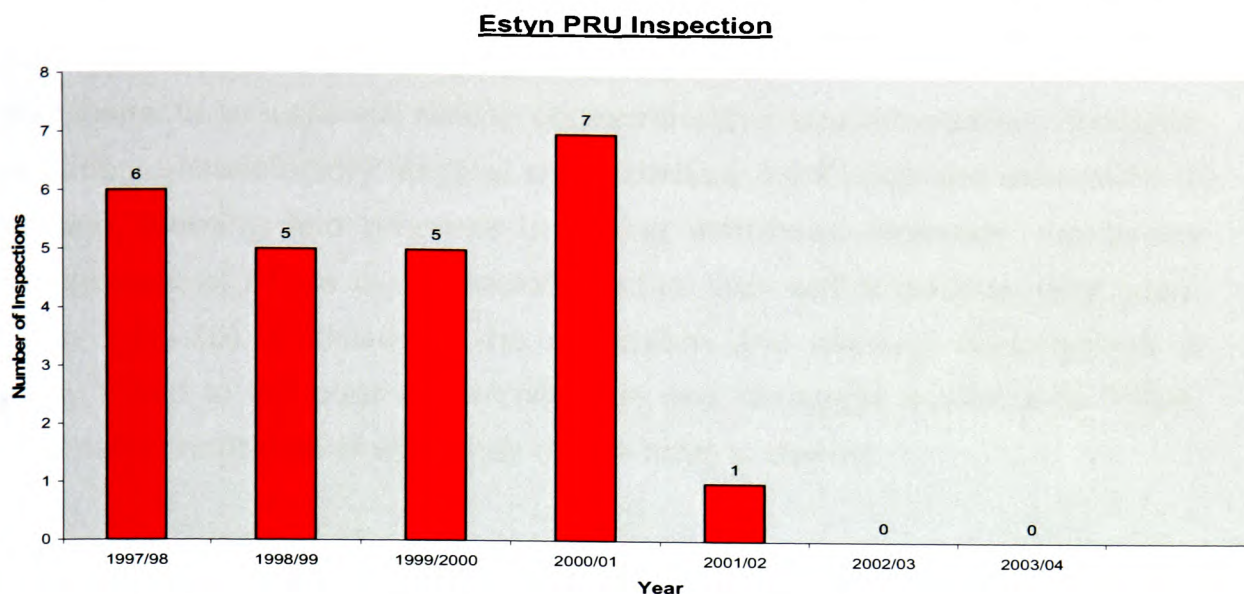
- *“...the length of time given to an Inspection is limited, within this time there is not sufficient time to speak to everyone, often information that we gather is paper based this makes it hard to make those decisions – you have to be very clear with your evidence and we don't not always have the opportunity to challenge...” (HMIa06)*

In more recent developments in England, Cole (2009) reports that during 2007/2008 a higher proportion of PRUs have been graded as good to outstanding compared to the PRU sample inspected in 2006/2007. OfSTED (2008) provides further positive reading. In the introduction (OfSTED 2008:10) it is reported that 'The proportion of pupil referral units are similar as all schools in their overall effectiveness'.

The percentage of PRUs judged as inadequate is slightly higher than other schools and only 7% of PRUs were judged as outstanding, whereas for other schools the percentage is higher, 15% OfSTED (2008). The Report goes on to say that achievement in PRUs is inadequate in 7% of the PRUs inspected. However, in paragraph 59 of the Report there are 'hints' at reasons why the task of the PRU is so hard The Report identifies the troubled histories of the students attending PRUs as a factor to low achievement in the 7% of PRUs. The Report identified how students attending PRUs often missed gaps in their education. Finally the Report said that achievement in PRUs was outstanding in 8%. The teaching and leadership in these PRUs was strong. Also note worthy is the fact that the proportion of PRUs was similar to other schools where teaching and learning were good or outstanding (Cole 2009).

### **3.5 Wales**

The following table (next page) records the number of PRUs inspected in Wales over a seven year period, the most inspected during 2001-2002 and no PRUs being inspected during 2003-2004 and 2004-2005.

**Table 3***Information source Estyn (2005)*

The number of PRU inspections in Wales, by comparison with England (table 1), clearly reflects the smaller number of PRUs in Wales. This of course is in line with the smaller pupil population in Wales. In 1998, there were 23 registered PRUs (National Assembly for Wales 2004b) in Wales whereas in England there were 286 (OfSTED 2004). In 2003-04 in Wales PRU numbers increased to 31 and in England numbers increased to 360. What this means is that there is a greater opportunity to analyse information available on standards in English PRUs.

In Wales, for example, there was only one PRU inspection carried out in 2001-02 and Estyn (2003) made no reference to this inspection in their Annual Report of Education and Training in Wales.

During 1997-98 a quarter of the registered PRUs in Wales were inspected. Estyn (1999) gave over five paragraphs to report on their findings. They found that PRU staff knew their pupils well, and that student attitude, behaviour and attendance improved. Progress in English and Maths was generally satisfactory or better. The day-to-day management or administration of the PRUs was efficient but the management overall was not satisfactory. Estyn (1999) also reported concerns about accommodation. The curriculum and assessment, recording and reporting and the absence of effective

monitoring, evaluation and review of educational provision were also a concern.

Later inspections were still raising concerns about accommodation, specialist resources, unsatisfactory staffing, unsatisfactory monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and progress in raising standards. However, day-to-day management of PRUs is satisfactory and in over half is good or very good. (Estyn 2001:75). Criticism of the curriculum and learning opportunities is clearly linked to the poor accommodation and resources available to PRUs. PRU staff cannot deliver what they do not have to deliver.

Estyn (2002) presented more in-depth findings from inspections carried out in 2000-01. Estyn (2002) reported that most of the pupils in PRUs were at least achieving satisfactory standards. It was felt that a strong factor for those achieving good progress was the strong link with mainstream schools and where externally accredited courses were offered. Teaching particularly in English and Maths was felt to be at least satisfactory and often good. The curriculum in all PRUs inspected was at least satisfactory and good in over half.

Most PRUs were good at promoting pupils' social and moral development, although there were concerns when inspecting Cwricwlwm Cymraeg (the Welsh element of the curriculum). The concern was that not enough was done to make students aware of their cultural heritage. Findings on students returning to mainstream school varied, Key Stage 2 (KS2) students returning to mainstream school most often. At KS4 students were more likely to move on to other types of mainstream education e.g. college or training. In two thirds of the PRUs inspected staff numbers were good. Teachers often had a clear role and Teaching Assistants provided good support. Estyn (2002) also highlighted areas of concern in accommodation, curriculum, quality of teaching, staff training and leadership and management.

Accommodation was only good in one PRU inspected; there were problems in the majority. PRUs do not have enough space, or facilities to offer a wider

curriculum. The teaching of science, technology, art, music and physical education were greatly affected. Several PRUs did not have appropriate accommodation for working one-to-one (1-2-1) with students, for holding confidential meetings or a base for staff. PRUs generally lacked enough learning resources e.g. books, maps, computers, pictures and practical equipment. Although it was reported that PRUs made good use of their resources, there were concerns that there were few plans to improve resources (Estyn 2002, 2003).

Where the quality of teaching was not satisfactory there were clear problems. Students did not have enough opportunities to investigate for themselves, there was too much use of worksheets and long-term planning did little to develop student skills. The quality of assessment was overall unsatisfactory. The majority of PRUs did not have effective procedures for recording student achievement and teachers' marking of student work was not effective in improving learning (Estyn 2001, 2002). Estyn (2002) found that generally PRUs had enough teachers and teaching assistants offered good support. However, there was not enough training for staff in SEN or the management of student behaviour. In some PRUs inspected it was reported that there were teachers with no qualifications in practical subjects or previous experience or qualifications in teaching students with difficult behaviour. The day-to-day quality of management and leadership in PRUs was usually good. The role of the PRU in half of the LEAs was not clear and therefore it did not have a clear role (Estyn 2002). This sometimes resulted in PRUs having to cater for a continuum of needs, abilities, ages and length of stay. As a result PRUs found it difficult to set clear aims for themselves. Only in one PRU inspected was there good planning and target setting with LEAs monitoring and assessing the service. Estyn (2002) reported these issues as weak and as major concerns.

In Wales development in PRUs is not as clear as that of PRUs in England. Concerns continued to be highlighted on quality of teaching and whether teachers were appropriately qualified. Accommodation, resources and leadership and management from LEAs are also continually highlighted. The

day-to-day leadership and management was generally reported as good, however, PRU head teachers do not control the improvement of availability in terms of premises and resources. Without allocated budgets PRU head teachers cannot spend, and many PRU head teachers have no budget available to them, financial decisions are made by the LEA. So what are LEAs doing to manage these concerns? *'No new wine.....only new bottles'*, (Garner 2000) understood that if PRUs were to do the job they are described as having the role to do, they must be supported appropriately by LEAs.

During the academic year of 2006/2007 Estyn inspected seven out of over 63 registered PRUs in Wales. The issue of registering a PRU is still an issue in Wales. Inspectors are clear that not all PRUs are registered.

This means that Estyn is unable to inspect this provision (Estyn 2008:40). Estyn reported on positive developments in that 84% of lessons observed were good or better and only a small number of lessons observed had important shortcomings (Estyn 2008:40). In over 60% of PRUs inspected, students made good or very good progression in their learning, improving their basic and key skills as well as gaining useful qualifications. It was reported that staff worked well with their pupils and staff provide good personal support to their pupils (Estyn 2008).

A concern that remains in PRUs is the quality of leadership and management. Just less than 50% of the PRUs inspected caused concern to the inspection teams and needed significant improvement (Estyn 2008:42). There was still concern about the level of knowledge the Management Committees have about teaching and learning in some PRUs and in four PRUs that had shortcomings the Management Committee was not rigorous enough in setting targets for improvement. One PRU did not have a Management Committee and some PRUs have not made improvements recommended from the last Estyn inspection. From this recent Report, I would interpret that the LEA is being identified as the cause for the shortcomings in leadership and management. In terms of the monitoring the qualities of a PRU the Management Committee have that role, the LEA lead this committee.



### 3.6 Welsh Developments

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) commissioned Estyn to carry out a survey that would contribute to raising standards and quality in education and training in Wales. The advice from the Estyn (2005a) Report was intended to support WAG's commitment to social inclusion and equal opportunities set out in *The Learning Country* (2001) and would contribute to the review of Circular 3/99: *Pupil Support and Social Inclusion*. The survey data was collected by gathering written information from every LA in Wales and then from visits by Estyn's District Inspectors to every LA, discussing information provided. It was not planned that any Estyn Inspector would visit any PRU or seek any data for this survey directly from any PRU.

The main finding of the survey was that there are a large number of 'unregistered units' in Wales. In Wales there were 30 registered PRUs but in reality there were over 50 'un-registered units'. Twenty of these 'units' were described by LEAs as PRUs, but had not been registered with the Welsh Assembly, they were unaware of their existence until this survey. Of the remaining units, although not registered, '*almost all matched the definition of a PRU*' (Estyn 2005a:6). What this means is that these units had fallen outside the Section 10 inspections. LEAs have registered 1601 students in PRUs; only two thirds of those students were placed in what LEAs regarded as PRUs. Over 500 students in Wales were placed in unregistered units (Estyn 2005a:12). There are clear procedures for opening and closing a PRU set down by the WAG, as there are for mainstream primary and secondary schools, it appears that some authorities have not following these procedures. PRUs, or unregistered units, are opened without appropriate structures and support being in place. These findings are reminiscent of findings in OfSTED (1993), where it was reported that educational provision for students not in mainstream schooling is outside a framework that monitors and regulates its quality.

Estyn (2005a) also found that 21% of pupils on roll at registered PRUs had statements of SEN. This figure does not reflect on the numbers of students with statements who are attending 'unregistered units' in Wales. There is no

published information available to the report about how many students with SEN attended 'unregistered units'.

In the framework of the Estyn (2005a) survey, four questions were asked:

- How well do the learning experienced in PRUs and unregistered units meet pupils' need and interests?
- How well are pupil in PRUs and unregistered units cared for, guided and supported?
- How well do LEAs manage PRUs and unregistered units?
- How well do LEAs track pupils without school places to ensure that they receive their full educational entitlement and their welfare is safeguarded?

*How well does the learning experienced in PRUs and unregistered units meet pupils' need and interests?*

Findings suggest that generally there is a lack of resources for PRUs to enable staff to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum. This lack of resources affected opportunities for improving skills and knowledge in science, ICT, art, music and design and technology. Survey findings suggest that the lack of an appropriate curriculum and learning resources placed students at a disadvantage and hindered their development (Estyn 2005a:21). Students with statements of special educational needs were disadvantaged greatly in relation to curriculum opportunities available in mainstream and special schools.

*How well are pupils in PRUs and unregistered units cared for, guided and supported?*

The survey found that students in PRUs and 'unregistered units' received good care, guidance and support and that students appreciated the individual attention and encouragement they received from staff (Estyn 2005a p22). However, some students were fearful of returning to mainstream provision because they believed they would receive less support. This must be an excellent reason for improved links between schools and PRUs, and an area

in which PRU staff can support training or sharing of skills. The survey did identify four shortcomings:

- not all units have the required policy for racial equality;
- units have made little progress in promoting accessibility for disabled people;
- units rarely conduct systematic health and safety or risk assessments;
- not all members of staff received training in child protection procedures (Estyn 2005a:23).

These shortcomings are linked to the lack of support and guidance of LEAs to PRUs.

*How well do LAs manage PRUs and unregistered units, and how well do LEAs track pupils without school place to ensure that they receive their full educational entitlement and their welfare is safeguarded?*

The survey found that LEA officers generally had a clear and appropriate view of the links between their policies and strategic plan for PRUs and 'unregistered units'. In addition the survey found that some LEAs made good use of PRU staff in providing outreach support for younger learners. However LEAs did report that they faced significant challenges planning for pupils who were educated out of school. Some LEAs reported that they were not able to prioritise funding to meet the full educational entitlement of 25 hours for students outside of mainstream education. Factors affecting these difficulties were identified and included: the requirement to provide 25 hours education for students outside of mainstream, the increase in numbers of excluded students, the growth in demand for alternative curriculum at KS4 and the difficulty of moving students from PRUs to mainstream or special schools (Estyn 2005a p 24).

The survey found that LEAs did not do enough to monitor the quality of provision in PRUs and 'unregistered units', or the provision purchased through external providers. LEAs did not generally keep good records of student achievement or monitor costs of placements. Monitoring of performance management was also not effective (Estyn 2005a:27). Over two-thirds were able to account for the provision and sometimes whereabouts of students not

on school rolls. There were also difficulties for LEAs in tracking the most vulnerable students in the authorities (Estyn 2005a:28).

The survey did identify some examples of good practice of LEAs in Wales. For example in some LEAs, the Education Welfare Service (EWS) played a key role in finding 'missing' students and most LEAs had systems in place to collect and collate a range of data on looked-after-children.

The survey did identify recommendations for the WAG, LEAs, schools and Estyn in order to move forward the role and performance of PRUs. In summary the survey suggested WAG should:

- enforce the requirement for LEAs to register as PRUs at all the sites where they maintain provision for students;
- monitor and evaluate educational outcomes for students outside of mainstream education;
- review the statutory framework governing the curriculum in PRUs;
- collect and analyse information about the SEN of all students receiving education outside of mainstream provision.

LEAs should:

- register all sites where they maintain provision for students educated outside of mainstream and keep WAG informed of changes;
- clarify the role of the PRUs including alternative curriculum strategies that may involve external providers;
- monitor the quality of education in PRUs;
- work in partnerships with schools to increase provision to 25 hours to all students;
- develop systems for tracking students, implement policies for dually registered students to retain links with their schools;
- provide PRUs with appropriate curriculum support and ensure that PRU staff have access to a full range of training opportunities.

Schools should:

- monitor and maintain closer links with dually registered students;

- provide PRUs with better background information;
- work in partnership with LEAs to monitor the quality of provision for their dually registered students;
- improve links for teachers in schools and PRUs.

Finally Estyn should ensure that all sites for PRUs and 'unregistered units' are inspected and review the training needs of inspectors in the anticipation of increased numbers of registered PRUs (Estyn 2005a:8-9).

The findings from this survey contributed to the WAG Inclusion and Pupil Support Consultation Document (2005b). The document '*covers the inclusion and support of learners of compulsory school age*' and will replace Circular 3/99: *Pupil Support and Social Inclusion* (Estyn 2005b p1). One of the points for consultation in the document is the clarification of the definition of PRUs, which is highlighted as a recommendation of the Thematic Survey carried out by Estyn. The guidance suggests that from September 2005 WAG intended to require LEAs to register the following as PRUs:

- *all out-of-school provision for excluded pupils (whether permanent or fixed);*
- *all other discrete units for key stage 1 to Key Stage 3 pupils;*
- *hospital school provision for groups of pupils e.g. for pupils with mental health needs (may be made jointly with health, not necessarily on hospital premises);*
- *units for young mothers or pregnant young women: and*
- *centres that provide 'home tuition' for groups of pupils.*

(WAG 2005b:97-98)

The consultation document asked if people agreed with the need to 'tighten' this new definition, if people agreed with the new definition and, if not, how could it be redefined? Findings from the consultation document were published at the end of 2005. What is clear from this document is the definite movement to develop a clear role for the PRU. This should lead to better quality of provision, links with mainstream schools, better staff training opportunities and support from LEAs.

I believe it would also have been useful to ask specifically how well head teachers manage the PRUs. The survey found that LEA officers generally had a clear and appropriate view of the links between their policies and strategic planning but no comments were made on the '*hands on*' leadership and management. Of course this survey looked at the 'bigger picture' which is appropriate. However, I do believe that all aspects, big and small of a picture must be understood for the picture to be clear. Looking at the head teacher's leadership and management is an essential element of that picture.

WAG commissioned Estyn to carry out a survey that would contribute to raising standards and quality in education and training in Wales. The advice from the Estyn (2005a) report was intended to support WAGs commitment to social inclusion and equal opportunities set out in *The Learning Country* (2001) and would contribute to the review of Circular 3/99: *Pupil Support and Social Inclusion*. The survey data was collected by gathering written information from every LEA in Wales and then from visits by Estyn's District Inspectors to every LEA to discuss information provided. No Inspector visited a PRU or asked staff or students direct questions.

In 2007 Estyn (2007), in their response to consultation of the proposed Additional Learning Needs Legal Competence Order 2007, referred to their survey of 2005. In their response to the consultation Estyn reported that since the survey, little had changed, and there were shortcomings of leadership and management of PRUs across Wales that impacted on students' standard of achievement. However, what was not clear is where Estyn saw the shortcomings. Were they with the PRU head teacher or with the LEA Management Committee?

### **3.7 Thoughts**

In conclusion, there is a clear point in educational history when legislation for the establishment and management of PRUs was provided. Section 19(2) and Schedule 1 of the Education Act 1996 is the primary legislation about PRUs. Sound and clear reasons for establishing PRUs are also evident. HMI inspectors were able to use poor quality of teaching and learning and teacher

attitudes to achievement as a tool to take control of the already 'off-site units'. However, it appears that these poor 'off-site units' easily became the PRUs that were to 'change the provision for students with challenging behaviour'. The staff that were reported to be, in some situations, the cause of low achievement of students attending previous 'off-site units', were now the staff working in PRUs.

Reviews highlighted some concerns about PRUs and the perceptions and misunderstanding of those outside PRUs, for example, the media and teachers in mainstream. On reflection, if the same staff, who were damned by HMI Inspectors, continued to work in 'off-site units' (newly named PRUs) it would be easy to understand those perceptions, although unfair. However, it is not clear if those perceptions are widely held by all key stakeholders who work with PRUs on a daily basis.

Findings from early inspection reports (Estyn 1999; Estyn 2001; Estyn 2002; Estyn 2003b; OfSTED 1993, OfSTED 1995a, OfSTED 1995b, OfSTED 1999), suggest that PRUs are underachieving, have poor planning, low expectations of students and staff, inappropriate curriculum to meet the needs of the students and no training available to develop PRU staff. The only clear positive is that PRU staff had good relationships with their students, although this is tainted by suggestions that as much as PRU staff care, they did not care enough to make changes.

A clear theme that emerged from this study is that there was a lack of communication or understanding of the role of the PRU. Criticism from inspections and media reports, for example, supports this (Estyn 1999; Estyn 2001; Estyn 2002; Estyn 2003b; OfSTED 1993, OfSTED 1995a, OfSTED 1995b, OfSTED 1999, OfSTED 2004, OHMCI 1996). Legislation and guidance started this cascade of poor communication; guidance was clear that a PRU is a new school, but legally not really a school, this in itself causes confusion. Another factor in these differing perspectives of PRUs is that legislation was introduced to make sure that students should no longer attend 'off-site units' where educational progress was poor. Creating PRUs, the 'new

school', would regulate their education, but those old failing 'off-site units' became the 'new schools' with the same staff and the same premises. Law (1998 p.98) suggested that '*PRUs have no real pedigree and their parentage is mongrel*'. Findings from inspections would support this bold statement, reports were negative and there appears to be no positives that these 'new schools' were created from.

It does not seem unreasonable to ask how or why this poor communication and understanding developed. I believe however that the answer is very close. The Secretary of State at the time introduced PRUs as the answer to the 'management of difficult and disruptive students', suggesting new 'experts' for dealing with the most difficult. However, media reports give another message. Inspection reports note these 'new schools' are being judged in line with the understanding of those who presented PRUs as the new school staffed by the experts. However, without an appropriate training programme it would be difficult if not impossible for those old 'off-site unit' staff, to develop the new skills and knowledge to meet those new ideals.

Historically there have been difficulties managing children and young people who cannot cope with the rigours of mainstream expectations. Over the years different agencies and organisations have tried to take the lead in developing provision. Most students, even some with SEBD, have managed to exist in some form of mainstream education, for example, in special classes in the mainstream or special schools. However there remains a small section of the educational population who just cannot work within this education structure and this is where PRUs provide a service. The perspective or the understanding of the role of the PRU was unclear. The policy makers have one perspective and the staff that support and manage PRUs have another, there are going to be gaps in expectations and therefore perceived failings and short comings, communication via training is not available, which all reports reviewed suggest.

As early as the Victorian times policy makers were linear in their approach to managing development, do A and B will happen. However, history has



demonstrated, with all of the development seen through the ages, that provision for children and young people is constantly changing or being replaced or re-named. This has happened because whatever provision is in place it has been judged to be failing the needs and rights of children and young people with SEBD. In their criticism of PRUs the inspection reports clearly highlight behaviours that influence the quality of the PRU. For example, reports constantly describe failings in terms of poor communication, lack of resources to achieve the aims, lack of training for teachers, poor planning, low achievement, low student expectation, low staff expectation, poor leadership and management, negative perception and PRU staff that care but not enough to make changes.

The development of PRUs may or may not have been the appropriate way forward in the 1990s, but they are here and can provide a good service. However, if there are clear failings there must be factors that are affecting shortcomings. HMI inspectors have reported on what they believe are the shortcomings of PRUs, I am not clear however if key stakeholders have the same perspective.

Developments in Wales e.g. Estyn's Thematic Survey (2005a) and WAGs Consultation Document: Inclusion and Pupil Support (2005b) support the need to clarify the role of the PRU. The main findings from Estyn's Survey is that there are large numbers of 'un-registered units' operating in Wales and without regulation there may be a return to the old 'off-site unit' mentality that the media and public had of PRUs. A clear recommendation from government policy in Wales is that LAs must register and monitor all sites that support students outside mainstream school. There are issues about how LEAs will manage this recommendation. For example;

- What are the strategies LEAs will develop to monitor and evaluate the quality of educational opportunities for students outside mainstream schools?
- What initiatives will LEAs develop to make sure that full education entitlement is available to students outside mainstream schools?

LEAs have previously stated that they have found it difficult to prioritise funding for the full educational entitlement for those students in PRUs and in 'unregistered units'. What changes within LEAs will occur in prioritising funding to meet their needs? As part of this entitlement LEAs must also develop strategies to monitor quality of teaching and learning and training opportunities for staff.

There is limited literature on PRUs and what is available are largely government documents. Some research has happened in the areas PRU work. However, samples used, questions asked and how they were asked differ from this study. There is however, a common thread that links findings of the limited research that has taken place in this field of education to my own research. Findings suggest shortcomings in the provision of resources, staff support, accommodation, and perception of the role of the PRU. However, one similarity that stands out to me is the question about the role of leadership and management of the PRU. It is clear that the finance available will greatly influence issues such as accommodation, resources and staff support. In some ways those issues can be addressed quickly as there is a clear route to who has responsibility, the LEA. However, there is some confusion in terms of leadership and management. There appears to be a shared role between the PRU head teacher and the LEA, but it is not clear who has the biggest share of the responsibility in terms of a resulting successful PRU or a failing PRU.

Key documents of this study have been OfSTED and ESTYN reports. There is very little written or published about the quality of PRU provision and less about key stakeholders perceptions. OfSTED and later ESTYN annually produce reports on educational and training standards which included, at times, information on standards in PRUs (Estyn 1999; Estyn 2001; Estyn 2002; Estyn 2003b; OfSTED 1993, OfSTED 1995a, OfSTED 1995b, OfSTED 1999, OfSTED 2004, OHMCI 1996). These reports criticised PRUs annually, highlighting poor standards in accommodation, staff training, resources, curriculum opportunities, teaching and learning and leadership and management.

I asked an Estyn inspector what he thought would make the biggest change in quality of PRU, the accommodation, staff training, resources, curriculum, teaching and learning or leadership or management of the PRU, *"...I would have to say it is the quality of leadership and management of the PRU that will have the biggest influence...with a good head in place much of what we are reporting as poor would improve quickly...a good head would improve teaching and learning, monitoring and assessment and much more..."* (HM1b06)

However, it is difficult to criticise inspection teams. PRUs are a new entity and Estyn and OfSTED inspectors would have struggled, understanding the dynamics and complexity of the relationships working in PRUs. There was no history of PRU inspections therefore no inspector would be experienced inspecting PRUs. This would certainly put forward some explanation for the mismatch of findings that were presented in annual reports. e.g. reports described teaching and learning, planning, assessment and recording was of poor quality but then went on to report that units were staffed by 'experienced teachers' (OfSTED 1993:7).

This type of information gathering is very linear. Inspection teams use a framework that has set questions and tasks that need to be completed by the inspection team in order to present findings in a set format and all within a limited time. Little time is available to gather information from key stakeholders. A standard questionnaire is sent to parents by the inspection teams. The format of the questionnaire is standard, no considerations is given to this group of parents who have already struggled with expectations from the mainstream schools. No extra support is offered to them in order to understand the process, many have literacy difficulties, standard 'parents meetings' are arranged to gather feedback, as would be offered in a mainstream school. Few parents from this student group actively take part in this process.

One study that did reflect on key stakeholder perceptions was Garner's study in 2000. Garner (2000), in a small study highlighted the perceptions of pupils,

teachers, parents and education officers (who Garner described as the 'principal actors') on the role of PRUs. This study differs from my own research in that parents and students were sample groups used to collect data. In his study Garner looked at:

- resourcing and accommodation,
- referral and reintegration policies,
- pupil and teacher status.

Findings suggested a sharp difference of perspectives and therefore confusion over the role of the PRU. Garner (2000) found that the different perspectives of the role of the PRU indicated continued policy confusion and a repetition of previous, largely unsuccessful, initiatives to support students with EBD outside of the mainstream. These findings do support elements of findings from my own research in that there is still some confusion about defining the role of the PRU.

Other studies provide little or no new insight to the role of PRUs and what people have to say about PRUs. For example a study on perceptions was carried out more recently, Capstick (2005) looked at pupil and staff perceptions of rewards at a PRU. Pupils and teaching staff completed questionnaires. Findings showed that some rewards used in the PRU were perceived by both teachers and pupils as effective, that teachers perceived rewards as a tool for changing pupil's behaviour and increased pupil motivation to learn, whereas pupils perceive the opposite. This was a small scale study, which did not have a large enough sample group to influence concerns and issues that are linked to PRUs, but this study would most certainly be of use to the individual PRU as an example of good self-evaluation practice.

Longman and Agar (1999) looked at science provision in PRUs. Findings were that resources in PRUs were variable, funding was insufficient, accommodation in PRUs for science was unsuitable and contact for support from mainstream school science teachers was minimal. These were not

surprising findings when the teaching and learning in PRUs of basic skills i.e. numeracy and literacy, have long been heavily criticised by inspection teams. There is currently no study on PRUs, which I have located, that identifies a theoretical framework underpinning the structure of the study in how data would be collected or analysed; this research project does. This project is the only research I am aware of that discusses a theory and asks key stakeholders why they think some PRUs are more successful than others.

Research that will, provide the educational community with information that may affect provision for students with SEBD has been commissioned by DfES. The Scottish Centre for Research into On-Line Learning and Assessment at The University of Glasgow are carrying out the research for the DfES. The research is a longitude survey with a start date Oct 1.10.06 and an end date 31.3.09. An interim report will be published in autumn 2009. The survey asks 'What happens to pupils excluded from Pupil Referral Units or Special Schools for pupils with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties?'

More recently the National Behaviour and Attendance Review in Wales (NBAR 2008) highlighted concerns about how PRUs are being used. Recommendation 11 of the Report stated the Welsh Assembly should commission studies to examine:

- *'...how PRUs are funded, the purpose of PRUs and their strategies for the management of pupils, securing their attendance and changing their behaviour and how they enable pupil to achieve and reach their full potential...'* (NBAR 2008:139).

England is also moving forward looking at the role of the PRU. Recently the DfCSF published a white paper Back on Track (2008), setting out an outline of a plan to transform alternative educational provision and PRUs in England. The plan is to replace the use of the name or term Pupil Referral Unit in legislation. This decision is based on the low numbers of PRUs using the PRU title in their name. Sir Alan Steer, in his letter to Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families identified concerns in the field of alternative educational provision and PRUs (DfCSF 2008:61). The concerns

highlighted in the letter mirrors those identified much earlier in England OfSTED (1993). I understand those concerns. In the short history of PRUs we have learnt that renaming failing off-site units did not change perceptions or the difficulties students and staff faced. However, it seems that history is repeating itself. Clause 236 of the Government Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill 2008-2009 re-name pupil referral units to “short stay schools”. Already colleagues are talking about ‘SS schools’. Will this label replace the ‘sin-bin’? We have yet to find out. A recent media article reporting on the Back to Track (DfCSF 2008) document used the label ‘sin-bin’ in a headline of an article discussing PRUs and changes the document proposes (Guardian 2008). This applies however only in England, in Wales pupil referral units continue to be called pupil referral units.

There is a history of discussion and contemplation about children and young people who are now described as having SEBD, and where these children and young people should be educated. Cole, Visser and Upton (1998) describe how behaviours that challenge today’s society were present in Victorian times. Since those times a range of ‘help’ or provision has been offered to support those that did not ‘fit’ into the mainstream of society. Provision has varied and generally standards of education and opportunities did not match those offered students attending mainstream education. Provision was often lacking in purpose, intellectual stimulus was weak and the work was well below pupils’ age and ability (OfSTED 1993). This is mirrored in the more recent ‘Back on Track’ (OfSTED 2008) document.

I find myself agreeing with some of the criticism reported by the HMI teams from England and Wales, I have sometimes questioned the quality of staff I have met working in PRUs, I have also criticised the quality of teaching and learning I have witnessed offered in PRUs. However, I am concerned that reports do not reflect the perceptions of a wider community of key stakeholders. One inspector I spoke to was clear that inspectors do not get a chance to chat in depth to key stakeholders “...*we don’t have an opportunity to ask in depth any questions to other key stakeholders...*” (HMIa06).

*I wanted to move forward and ask key stakeholders about their perspective of PRUs. However as my knowledge and skills developed, my awareness for the need for structure was also developing. A fellow research student, in their final stage of writing, asked me what theoretical framework I was using. I didn't know. I began to fully realise that working at PhD level was not an extended Master Degree, this was about independent thinking, doing it my way, but of course I had to find my way. I soon realised I was about to embark on another learning curve. During the many years I have worked with children and young people with social and behavioural difficulties I knew that small changes could results in much bigger responses however, I had not formed or understood why this happened until I formed a sense of theory. The next chapter is my introduction into the world of theoretical frameworks.*

## CHAPTER FOUR: DISCOVERING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*This is where the search for a theory that I am happy with starts. Barr Greenfield (1975) describes theory as sets of meanings which people use to make sense of their work and behaviour within it. I have certainly struggled to find meaning and make sense of the research that I have embarked on. Like most eager research students I had an 'idea' of what I wanted to do or know; I wanted to know what people think makes a good PRU. The structure I would need to achieve what I wanted had not been framed in my mind - in fact it had not occurred to me that such structure needed to exist. I was naive enough not to realise that without a structure or framework for my research 'there was trouble ahead'; confusion, worry, more confusion and many sleepless nights.*

*Reading Barr Greenfield's description and explanation of theory threw me back to a previous life as a competitive swimmer, which led me to understanding better the role of theory. My swimming coach in his efforts to improve my technique and competitive standing would tell me about Newton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Law of Motion, '...for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction...'. He would tell me that in order for me to increase speed I needed to think about how I positioned my body in the water and how my hands and then arms entered the water, this would affect the force and resistance I used and created when pulling then pushing myself through the water. He told me that teaching and coaching swimming was all about interpreting and communicating Newton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Law to his squad. Later in life I trained as a swimming coach and found that he was right, Newton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Law plays a major part in the training of swimming coaches. The best swimmers understand this theory of movement and develop their skills within it.*



*I never reached the dizzy heights of swimming for my country but remained a regular club and county swimmer, not able or not committed enough to make the next step. I now understand that part of my lack of greater success was due to the fact that I did not want to know about the 'theory' behind swimming, in other words how swimming worked. Instead I had a 'just tell me how to do it' attitude. I didn't want to 'think' about what I was doing I just wanted to do it. This attitude to my swimming and technique would not equip me with the understanding or skills to 'work it out or problem solve' whenever I met different conditions. My approach meant that when I swam in different lane positions, different water temperatures or different water softness I did not have enough understanding, ability or skills to make appropriate adjustments in order to maintain good speed and technique. I would only perform well in specific conditions, which is not how the best achieve. To have real insight and the skills to do better you must 'think'. Working within a theoretical framework enables you to do this.*

The principles or suppositions, within a chosen theory, give explanation and foundation to your views and understanding of the world. Theory varies according to the area of knowledge in question (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001). A clear example of this is my own experience. Whereas Newton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Law underpins what happens in the water, it does not offer an explanation of what happens in PRUs. This is the case for my previous experience as a swimmer and swimming coach and the current research project. This research project is looking at a very specific area of knowledge in education, PRUs. Theories in this area of education are in the early stages of formulation. This research will add to the development and understanding of the day to day working of an effective PRU.

#### **4.1 *Finding a Theory***

Finding a 'theory' has been a very difficult element of my study. First I needed to understand and recognise the importance of theory which I did in my reflection as a swimmer and later swimming coach. To move forward I had to identify a theoretical framework that I felt underpinned, described and explained life within a PRU.

The first thing that helped me move forward was to recognise that a PRU is a 'whole system'. There are many kinds of systems. Hardly anything is not a system. Nature for example is a whole system, so is a family or a company. To deal with a whole system, it is important to understand all the factors involved. You must work with everything that is relevant to it. Nothing can be left out, including the small as well as the big, what we feel as well as what we think and what we perceive. My data for analysis is made up of the perceptions of key stakeholders of the behaviours, relationships, entities or factors that interact and make up the PRU system.

#### **4.2 *Linear or Non-Linear***

The next step was to decide what type of system I saw PRUs as, simple or complex. A simple system reacts in a 'linear' way whereas complex systems are 'non-linear'. The terms 'linear' and 'non-linear' dynamics are synonymously mathematically linked with simple and difficult. Linear being predictable whereas non-linear systems apply to unpredictable things that cannot be solved easily; one-offs that do not fit the expected pattern, as with students with SEBD. Linear and non-linear solutions can therefore be described as being at opposite poles. (Bryne1998). Solutions in a linear equation can be plotted, for example if recording information or findings on a graph it would produce a straight line. Changes are proportional, change one variable and other variables change with it. Linear changes are smooth and continuous. However, non-linear findings cannot be plotted in the same way. Within non-linear theories changes can be very sudden, paradoxical and chaotic, opposite to what you expect (Peters 1987, Fowler 1996). For example, changing a variable within a complex system in a small way and the

outcome could result in a drastic fall or change or it could double, better known as the 'butterfly effect' (Gleick 1987).

Outcomes that are non-linear cannot be predicated with any certainty, regardless of how much information we have about them. This type of system is not machine-like but is 'adaptive' in that there is interaction within the environment. Systems that are adaptive to an environment learn in one way or another in order to preserve or survive. As managers and leaders we try and keep things predictable or linear, but in terms of managing and understanding the dynamics of working within a system that supports students with SEBD, as in PRUs, life is not predictable. It is unpredictable and therefore non-linear. Strategies have to be adaptive, outcomes are complex. In order to preserve order and survive it is important that we learn.

Life within a PRU is certainly complex; relationships between staff and students, students and students, students and their siblings, students and their carers, students and other professional, staff and staff, staff and the head teacher, the teacher and the etc, etc., makes it difficult, if not sometimes impossible to predict outcomes. In such complex systems it is very difficult to predict the future or outcomes. However, gathering enough information and analysing that information will help determine which of the agents or conditions or behaviours is more important to the outcome (Flower 1996).

### **4.3 Systems**

A system is understood as a group of interacting units or elements that have a common purpose, the units or elements can be almost anything for example, cogs, people or computers. Systems are generally classified as open and closed systems. All systems have boundaries, the boundaries of open systems because they interact with other systems or environments are flexible, whereas boundaries of closed systems are more rigid (Helms and Cengage 2006).

An open system is a system that regularly exchanges feedback with other systems or the external environment. Closed systems refer to systems that

have little interaction with other systems or the outside environment (Jackson 2000).

Healthy open systems continuously exchange feedback with other environments, analyse feedback, adjust internal systems as needed and then transmit necessary information back out to the environment. Closed systems have hard boundaries through which little information is exchanged. Organisations that have closed systems are often unhealthy. The main difference between closed systems and open systems is the complexity of environmental interaction. Closed systems have little complexity and often are mechanical, for example, a thermostat is a simple device dependent mainly on changes in the local temperature. Open systems such as organisations with human interaction, such as a PRU are more intricately dependent on their environment (Helms and Cengage 2006)

A PRU like other organisations is a systems and I believe a successful PRU is a good example of an open system, where boundaries are flexible with regular exchanges between other systems. The failing PRU, I believe, is more closely linked to a closed system.

Chaos and complexity is about the study of open systems. Within the world of chaos and complexity is a complex adaptive system. This 'system' displays dynamic behaviour that is different to simple stability and which is non-linear in its existence. 'Complex adaptive systems' are self-organising structures that imitate human behaviour, they are made up of numerous elements interacting and creating a single, organised and dynamic entity (Bertuglia and Vaio, 2005). The dynamic entity described by Bertuglia and Vaio is emergent behaviour.

'Adaptive complex systems' have particular characteristics. Bertuglia and Vaio (2005) identify these characteristics, adaptive complex systems:

- are made up of many elements or agents or behaviours that are self-organising, adaptive, interactive and are connected in a way that the action from each element or agent can provoke a number of responses;

- are able to interact with other systems, that constitute its environment and whose stimuli it reacts to and is sensitive to the information it receives from its environment;
- can identify regularities from the feedback and models develop to 'explain' the regularities identified;
- react to the systems that make up its environment based on the 'model' and observes the responses from the other systems, it uses feedback from the other systems to learn and adapt

(Bertuglia and Vaio, 2005)

The 'adaptive complex system' is defined as an open, non-linear system. The word adaptive tells us that the system is ever changing, adapting to its environment and conditions. Within a system there are dynamic entities that behave unpredictably which result in behaviour that is described as emergent behaviour. This dynamic entity, I believe, reflects the PRU head teacher. The characteristics described by Bertuglia and Vaio (2005) describe the life and role of the PRU head teacher. The head teacher's response to staff, students, parents and other professionals will result in emergent behaviour. A successful PRU head teacher must interact with other systems for example, the LA, mainstream schools, management committees, government guidance and statutory expectations which constitute its whole environment. The feedback they get from these systems, based on how they initially interacted will influence any changes they need to make in order to maintain a supportive partnership.

An example of an 'adaptive complex system' that demonstrates 'emergent behaviour' was introduced in 1987. Reynolds created boids, which is simply a computer model of flocking, herding or schooling behaviours; each boid was programmed with three simple rules

1. separation: steer to avoid crowding each other
2. alignment: steer toward the average heading of other boids
3. cohesion: steer to move toward the average position of other boids

([www.navgen.com](http://www.navgen.com), March 2007)

Behaviour that resulted was very similar to the behaviour of a 'real' flock of birds. They turned together and moved around objects very much like the real thing. The behaviour of the boids is a good example of 'emergent behaviour'. The behaviour of the boids was not predictable from the initial rules set. However, the rules set would have been useful to real birds as they make good sense in terms of survival but there was no such incentive in this mechanical demonstration (Cunningham 2001).

I believe that the adoption of these rules in the PRU or 'adaptive complex system' will help with the understanding of what factors influence the making of a successful or failing PRU. The rules set by Reynolds for his boids were clear behaviours and actions the boids should take from specific feedback:

- if there are obstacles move around them
- avoid getting too close to the other boids
- don't crowd
- stay within a safe distance to other boids

The movement of the boids is unexpected, splitting away from each other to avoid obstacles and then uniting is deemed 'emergent' behaviour. Rules set can remain simple but can be changed to suit different situations. A variety of obstacles can be placed within the environment requiring action, but with the simple clear rules set 'emergent behaviour' will occur. However, creating and setting the rules for the PRU head teacher is the key, I believe, to behaviours that will result in a successful or failing PRU.

#### **4.4 *Chaos and Complexity***

I chose chaos and complexity theory as a framework for looking at the management and life within PRUs. I believe the flexibility of this theory will give me the opportunity to stand back and reflect on the 'whole' situations, with all the unpredicted outcomes instead of trying to break it down into pieces that have a clear path to a predicated outcome. Chaos theory, from which complexity theory developed, works with non-linear dynamics. Some may argue that, chaos theory and complexity theory have differences. However; others argue that chaos theory and complexity theory are blood brothers

(Morrison 1998). Arising initially from the 'hard' sciences, the study of chaos and complexity theory has rapidly spread to the 'fuzzy' sciences of Sociology and Psychology. In this study I have used the term 'chaos and complexity theory', I believe the two words 'chaos' and 'complexity' are intertwined and cannot be isolated from the other. I believe that the two theories are 'blood brothers'. I believe that chaos theory is a broad theoretical framework within which complexity theory is subsumed.

Chaos and complexity theory is not so concerned with disorder but rather the void in our understanding of what is happening. Not being able to predict or control chaotic situations comes from the fact that there is so much information and so many complex relationships, that we are incapable of describing and explaining what is happening (Hayles 1991). PRUs are a new entity and Estyn and OfSTED inspectors would have struggled in dealing with this. HMI teams had not experienced PRUs previously, they would have struggled to understand the dynamics and complexity of the relationships working in PRUs. This would certainly put forward some explanation for the mismatch of findings that were presented in annual reports. Official government reports described teaching and learning as poor and planning, assessment and recording as of poor quality but then went on to report that units were staffed by 'experienced teachers' (OfSTED 1993:7).

Chaos and complexity theory developed from earlier chaos theory. For some this new area of science will have as much impact on our lives as Michael Faraday's discovery of electricity (MacGill 2006). Chaos theory appeared in the middle part of the last century from studies of inanimate systems, including the study of Edward Lorenz's work in Meteorology (MacGill 2006). In some respects, application of chaos and complexity theory goes back further to Gestaltist psychology with evolutionary theories that date back to the nineteenth century (Radford 2006). The application of complexity and chaos theory in the study of social organisation is a new development seen within the last 20 years (Radford 2006). I hope that the use of complexity and chaos theory in this study helps move forward, in some way, the use of this theory further in the social sciences. Learning about and understanding

chaos and complexity theory has created the biggest shift in my own thinking and understanding of my self in my work.

Deciding that chaos and complexity theory was to form the framework for my study not only gave me more focus for my research, it also helped with my management of outcomes from interactions between students and students, and the other relationships and variables within the PRU. I found it easier when working with staff and planning for development and change. I found it easier to work with staff and other professionals in terms of understanding student's needs and behaviour. One of the biggest changes for me was in the delivery of induction training for newly qualified teachers (NQT) and newly qualified social workers. When I deliver training to NQTs I link Gleick's principals of Chaos theory (Gleick 1987) to student behaviour. NQT students feed back to me that they find it easier to make some sense of student behaviour and are able to plan better for unpredictable behaviour, often exhibited by students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, who attend PRUs.

In terms of research, the 'analytical reductionist' view, which is linear, looks to provide findings by identifying key input and output variables and establishing links between them. However, complexity and chaos theory draws from and reflects on the importance of the interconnectedness of variables within systems and the qualities that then emerge from them (Radford 2006).

#### **4.5 *Chaos and Complexity Principles and PRUs***

The language of chaos and complexity is new, particularly in the area of the social sciences, and even more so in education and PRUs. It is generally defined in computer and mathematical frameworks. I have however, linked the language of chaos and complexity to examples in education, education within PRUs and experiences of working with students with SEBD.

Gleick (1987) identified a number of principles that are central to chaos, some of which can be easily translated to principles when working with PRU students and staff. These principles can also be applied to the classroom as



well as the whole school and at national levels in terms of expectations and perceptions of provision. Gleick (1987) principles are:

- *small-scale changes in initial conditions can produce unpredictable changes in outcome*
- *very similar conditions can result in very dissimilar outcomes*
- *regularity and uniformity break down to irregularity and diversity*
- *long term prediction is impossible*
- *effects are not straightforward continuous functions of causes*

*I like how Gleick has created such simple and clear principles or statements to demonstrate chaos theory, which in itself is not always clear to the onlooker. It was finding these principles that first steered my thinking. Living or working in a system that is governed by chaotic and complex behaviour, as PRUs are, is difficult. There is a need to make sense of why things occur, why the students exhibit behaviours. Accepting these simple principles has made my thinking change and my understanding grow.*

Below I have looked at each of the principles and linked them to my own working experiences with staff and students within PRUs.

***Small-scale changes in initial conditions can produce unpredictable changes in outcome. This relates clearly to the 'butterfly effect' (Gleick 1987)***

In the 1980's policy change meant that there was a more competitive atmosphere amongst schools. The introduction of the National Curriculum and league tables meant that students who were not academic achievers or those that struggled with the new demands on them were 'cast aside.' Schools tried to hide those students who affected their statistics and the development of 'off-site units' took off. The intention was to raise standards for all students. Instead it created a 'second class' system of education for students. As a result of these 'off-site units' more action was needed by

policy makers and PRUs were born. But at what cost to the students, teachers and policy makers? PRUs were planned in the same linear way as mainstream schools were managed. Policy makers did not consider the 'feedback' offered from the bad experiences of the 'off-site units' and as a result PRUs were reported as failing.

In terms of working and supporting students attending PRUs, smaller scale changes in conditions can produce unpredictable changes in outcome. For example, in terms of behaviour management, small changes in classroom geography or environment, I have found make great changes.

In 1999 I was told by the LEA that the PRU would be working with larger numbers of SEBD students. However, the size of the accommodation we worked in would remain the same. The increase in student numbers was small but the impact for staff on behaviour management was enormous. There was a marked increase in student conflict, student on-task time decreased, student attendance suffered, there was also an increase in staff sickness. I tried a number of strategies; I staggered break times, I changed student groups, I changed the timetable and I even considered some students attending part time, but neither my staff nor I noticed any improvements that were long lasting.

I was visiting a friend whose son was in the second year of his teacher training. He was training to teach in primary school. As part of his course he was looking at the history of education and asked me if I knew anything about the Plowden Report. I was not able to help him but I was interested in finding out more. Maybe, I could help him. What I found however, was an answer to my own difficulties.

The Plowden Report (1967) is generally accepted as being responsible for the change in practice of seating primary school children in rows to working in small groups (Wheldall 1988). Wheldall (1988) gives credit to the report for promoting the concept of 'child-centred' learning, but also suggests that the

report urged the change in seating arrangements “without referring to any supporting empirical evidence”.

The Report was clear in its view that setting up small groups of learners of the same or similar stage would benefit individualisation in student learning, teacher time and that effective learning would or could only really take place if conditions of continued peer interaction were present.

*“Sharing out the teacher’s time is a major problem. Only seven or eight minutes a day would be available for each child if all teaching were individual. Teachers, therefore, have to economise by teaching together a small group of children who are roughly at the same stage.”*

*Plowden Report (1967), para 754/5*

Bennett and Blundell (1983) highlight some benefits from the report for group work:

- children learn to get along
- children help one another

So strong was the message from the report that almost all primary schools geared themselves into action and adopted the advice. Very quickly classrooms were changing and small groups of students around table replaced students sitting at individual tables in rows.

However, the message was also clear to me. My students did not have the emotional or social skills to cope with these expectations. Other therapeutic work had to take place before the students were able to cope with the expectation placed on students, such as independent learning. As teaching groups are small in PRUs it is not unusual for groups of students to be seated together, in the hope they do learn to work together. This was the case in the PRU I worked in. Teachers had placed students in this social setting, students worked around tables.

I changed the classrooms around. I used the same furniture, the classrooms remained the same size, the displays remained the same and the temperature and lighting remained the same. The one change I made was to make sure that every student had their own work area. I arranged the seating to make sure that they did not have eye contact with one another. I placed every desk facing the wall, using the other classroom room furniture to sit between each desk. The change in student behaviour and on-task time was staggering. Student conflict was greatly reduced I became very aware of this as I was needed less often to deal with any crisis. However, what staff noticed first was that noise level was so much reduced. Within a matter of days there was a marked improvement in the 'quality of life' within the PRU for students and staff. This seemingly small change had created huge changes. Over the years I have worked with other PRU staff teams and have supported them to review their classroom geography which they report has also made improvements in students' behaviour and attitude to work.

At the time I was not aware of the tools I was using. I knew there was a problem and I knew I wanted to solve it. Now I recognise this early influence of chaos and complexity theory on me. For example, I had used feedback loops; I reviewed feedback I received from the behaviours within the classroom, then I made a change. However, this one small change influenced so much, less noise, more on-task behaviour, fewer conflicts, more work from the students, less distraction, less stress on me as well as staff, improved staff well-being, more achievement for students, which in turn led to more opportunities for raising students self esteem. This event I would now describe as an example of the 'butterfly effect'.

***Very similar conditions can result in very dissimilar outcomes (Gleick 1987)***

The introduction of the national curriculum resulted in only some students achieving. For many students able to cope with mainstream life, the national curriculum opened up opportunities for them. However, those students who struggled academically found themselves being excluded from the classroom. The new curriculum celebrated academic achievement but eliminated

opportunities for those who needed other learning experiences. Teaching styles and teaching strategies that enable staff to work through the new curriculum do not suit every student. Many schools found themselves struggling with students who could not cope and other strategies had to be found. Off site units was one strategy used. The national curriculum was meant to be inclusive but for many it was the opposite. Students were taken out of the classroom and sent to units run by staff who did not have the skills to move students forward.

This continues to apply to the strategies we use with our students. My own memories of school are similar to those of today. For the benefit of the teachers I had to look at them when they were 'teaching'. The teacher was only confident that we were listening to the instruction, or the story, if I and my peers were sitting still, looking toward them and not fidgeting. In the mind of the teacher, learning could only take place if the conditions were right. I am very aware that this practice still occurs in schools today. Many able students can work in these conditions but many more can not. They find themselves excluded from lessons and eventually mainstream school, they are deemed not able to follow instructions and labelled disruptive. For many students with SEBD the conditions set by the teacher are too difficult. Some students use so much energy focusing on the need to be still and maintain eye contact that they have little energy left to learn, this is a clear example, I believe, that *'very similar conditions can result in very dissimilar outcomes'* (Gleick 1987).

***Regularity and uniformity break down to irregularity and diversity (Gleick 1987)***

The introduction of regularity and uniformity in the management of PRUs has led to greater problems for PRUs' students and managers. The linear approach of 'one size fits all' has raised many issues. Students attending PRUs have complex needs and the restraints first placed on the development of PRUs have led again to non-regulated units being developed and standards of provision again not being monitored.

Currently there are no 'bench marking' opportunities for PRUs in either England or Wales. This is because each PRU is unique. There are many areas in which they will differ. For example:

- number on their caseload
- type of student caseload
- the socioeconomic background of students,
- social and emotional needs of students,
- special education needs of students
- age of students
- gender

In other words each PRU is unique, different, because of the complexity and individual needs of each of the students, the skills and knowledge of the staff team and how the LEA structures the Management of the PRU.

The PRU has been created in a very 'one size fits all' approach. However, what inspection teams are reporting is that the 'size' does not fit anyone, there is criticism every year. PRUs have been given a title and guidance which suggests regularity and uniformity in terms of named education provision. However, in terms of quality and opportunities for bench marking, as there is in mainstream schools, including special schools, the other resources must be equal. There should be appropriate accommodation, funding, resources and training for staff. Without these, equal opportunities for staff and students in PRUs do not exist, PRUs will become, in Gleick's terms, irregular and diverse and seen to be failing.

### ***Long term prediction is impossible (Gleick 1987)***

Outcomes for students attending PRUs are excellent examples of this principle, particularly for KS4, the phase that I work in. On referral to the PRU I ask for any baseline information that schools may have available for the students. Many of the students we support have experienced difficulties for some time and their attitude to learning has generally been negative. Therefore for many students the most recent assessment information we are given are KS2 SATS results. However, we often receive information from

school about the student's *potential*. With this information, outcomes and expectations for students achievement at the end of KS4 is often predicted, not by PRU staff but by school staff who made the referral or the LEA.

Of course in reality there is little chance of these expectations being met, which results in students, and PRU staff being perceived as failing. The long term prediction for academic achievement for PRU students is, I believe impossible. Many students have the intellectual ability to cope with the academic demands on them. However, their social and emotional needs do not allow most students to access continued educational support for them to develop the skills and knowledge that enable them to achieve their educational potential. Of course another issue is that PRUs do not have the resources to provide a full curriculum so students will not have access to nine, ten or more GCSE subject specialists which is available in mainstream schools.

An illustrative case: I worked with a female student who at the age of 13 years 9 months was taken in Care by the local authority. At KS2 she achieved Level 6 in all core subjects. Here was a student, who potentially could be predicted as achieving C – A\* grades in a large number of GCSE examinations, a potentially successful student. However, she became a looked-after child (LAC) after evidence showed that she had been physically and emotionally abused by her mother's boyfriend for almost three years. Her attendance at secondary school had dropped to less than 62% and she had received 4 fixed term exclusions for violence against other students. She was finally permanently excluded for possessing 'illegal drugs' on school premises. During her short time as an LAC student she became more involved in the drug scene and quickly left education behind. When she was referred to us, school and the LEA still predicted high academic achievement, based on her KS2 SATs achievement. No consideration was taken of the student's social and emotional needs. We worked hard with this student, we worked to raise her self esteem and introduce her back to the idea that she could achieve. With support she refocused in year 11. She tried hard to catch up on the years she had not been attending school, she worked hard to fill the gaps in

her education. I believe she was successful; she gained five GCSEs D-B grades. The LEA however, did not see her achievements as something to celebrate. Her chaotic life and the complexities in her relationships and life experiences made long-term prediction impossible. Another concern is that if the LEA were predicting this young girl as potentially an academically successful student I have to wonder why they excluded her from potentially the environment that would give her chances in life, her school.

***Effects are not straightforward continuous functions of causes (Gleick 1987)***

A very clear example of this principle was the renaming of 'off-site units'. On the Friday we have Off-Site units, on the next working day we have Pupil Referral Units. Renaming failing provision did not create any quality differences in the newly name PRU, inspection reports criticised this provision before and after the changing of the name (OfSTED 1993, OfSTED 1995).

Placing a student in a PRU does not always mean the PRU will provide the answers to the management, education and reintegration of difficult and disruptive students back into the mainstream. A student's social and emotional needs are complex and PRUs are not being supported to develop to meet those needs. Appropriate skills and knowledge in PRU staffing is a continued concern, staff training and opportunities for CPD are not available.

Chaos and complexity theory is not only made up of Gleick's principles, there are other aspects of this theory. Order and insight that arrives from chaos and complexity is described in terms of 'emergence', 'strange attractors', 'the butterfly effect' and 'feedback', (Byrne 1998). Below I have outlined each notion and linked them to PRUs and working with students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties

#### **4.6 Emergence**

The notion of 'emergence' is part of the chaos and complexity language (Byrne 1998). Emergence refers to patterns, in this case behaviours, which form within systems. Relatively simple interactions, which on their own would



not be seen as having any great influence, can have a 'knock-on effect' that creates something unexpected.

*I believe there is an argument to use this project as an example of emergence. Earlier (p1) I described how when I started my study I had no idea what my study would end up looking at or looking like. I described my study as an example of a 'self-organising system'. Lucas (2009) linked self-organisation systems to complexity theory as he does with emergence. Each of my chapters may have little to say on their own. However, closing each chapter pushed me toward starting another. Maybe a simpler way to think about emergence is to think about it as 'a happy accident', or in some cases not so happy. Something that comes out of nothing, something not expected.*

Emergence means that given a sufficient degree of complexity (unpredictability) behaviour will emerge. Emergent behaviour can be positive or negative. A much used explanation of emergence is the creation of the anthill. The anthill emerges as a result of simple interactions between the ants. Another example is the behaviour of a company. A company's director makes decisions, yet that company's actual behaviour can surprise its director. The company can appear to resist the director, even when it does not seem that anyone in particular is resisting. An emergent behaviour of one PRU is order and compliance, whereas emergent behaviour in another PRU with the same guidance will be failure. The interactions between all the factors within the PRU create the emergent behaviour.

This study looks at emergent behaviours within PRUs, positive and negative emergent behaviour. The study analyses key stakeholder perception of behaviours and actions within PRUs that exhibits positive behaviour where there is compliance, order and success. The study also analyses feedback from key stakeholders within PRUs where there is negative emergent

behaviour. Where staff and students feel unsafe, staff sickness is high, and students are not achieving potential and inspection teams criticise.

#### **4.7 *Strange Attractors***

Turner (2004) and Byrne (1998) use the example of an unforced pendulum swinging under gravity. The pendulum, when pulled back passes its central point and will swing to another point past its central point, which is an attractor. Its behaviour is predictable. In simple terms 'strange attractors' means behaviour, which has boundaries, but which cannot be accurately predicted. The concept of 'strange attractors' is the difficulty of predicting exactly what will happen or what a system will do, unpredictably (Turner 2004). What is 'special about a 'strange attractor' is that it is unique, like snowflakes no two are ever exactly the same.

A simple example of 'strange attractors', in terms of education and particularly in PRUs, is student behaviour. It is predictable that there are going to be outbursts of frustration often leading to aggression but it is not always possible to predict what type of outburst or aggression it will be or why the outburst occurred and what the outcome or the resulting action may be. The strange attractors are vast and create great elements of surprise for teachers in terms of management of behaviour. For example, when politely greeting a student in the morning it should be easy to predicate a reasonable response, however, strange attractors influence which can include hunger, sleep deprivation, lack of medication, mis-use of drugs or alcohol, abuse, bullying and much more. If a member of staff has performed the act of greeting that same student in the same way many times and received a repeated response it is reasonable to expect a repeated response. However, these strange attractors, which occur without predication, mean that the response cannot be predicted.

Another example of this is the development of PRUs. Policy makers changed the name of the off-site units and called them PRUs – this was to be the answer to the difficulties highlighted in the term 'off-site' provision. They predicted a new world of SEBD provision and management of students with

SEBD however, the unpredictable happened, which was that PRUs were just another provision for students with SEBD with the same problems. This had not been predicted. The only change that occurred was that there was a new name, the 'strange attractors' such as confusion over expectations or understanding of the role, staff training, lack of resources, public and media perception and training had not been considered.

#### **4.8 Butterfly Effect**

The 'butterfly effect' links closely to Gleick's (1987) principle *small-scale changes in initial conditions can produce unpredictable changes in outcome* is a phenomenon in that there is sensitivity to initial conditions. This behaviour, or phenomenon, is chaos, in that there is instability. A small change leads to massive reaction. The link with 'strange attractors' and the 'butterfly effect' are clear. Turner (2004) simplifies this term and describes how the flap of a butterfly's wing in the Amazon can lead to a hurricane in Texas. The implications of this effect when working with students with SEBD are vast. Students attending PRUs can be described as living lives that are chaotic; there are often many systems in their lives that if changed in the smallest degree can result in huge and drastic behaviour changes. These 'systems' include education procedures, inconsistency by responsible adults of consequences, social experiences, home life and expectations, these of course can be seen to be large changes which to some degree allows some prediction of change in the students responses.

However, within those larger changes are 'micro changes' and are truer to the definition of Turner's explanation. For example, the change of tone in the teachers voice, new furniture, new text books, new pens and pencils, small changes in the diet, (having a banana instead of an apple). A simple example from my own teaching experience brings life into the butterfly effect. I had been working closely with a small group of students with SEBD for about 4 months. I wear glasses for every day necessity and always wore my hair tied up. Over the weekend I visited the hairdresser, had a shorter hair cut which meant I was able to wear my hair down, I also had an eye test and changed my glasses. The response on the following Monday was extreme. Where

staff complimented me on my new glasses and hairstyle, one student found the change very difficult and refused to attend my class for a whole week. This of course impacted on his behaviour in school, and consequently at home.

#### **4.9 Feedback Loops**

The control of these 'systems' is about getting understanding from the output (the behaviour) to the input of the system (supporting strategy and approaches); in chaos and complexity theory this is called 'feedback' (Byrne 1998). There are two types of 'feedback', positive and negative. 'Positive feedback' confirms information that was put in to the system is correct. The feedback I received from the hairdresser event was 'negative feedback', and as a result of this feedback I learnt that I needed to do something different. I changed my approach to my work. Now when I am working closely with a group of students, I inform them that I am going to the hairdressers, or planning to change my glasses. Whatever changes I am planning that will be physically evident to the student I now prepare them for it. I have not experienced that extreme reaction to physical changes in my dress or presentation of my self since I have changed my approach. I do however continue to work to monitor my behaviour with students with SEBD.

An example of 'linear' thinking in education was the creation of PRUs. LA renamed failing 'off-site units' and called them PRUs. Was it perceived the problem would disappear? However, the role of PRUs as a provision was then described by the policy makers as failing (Kitchener 2004). This is because PRUs as a form of provision was being measured by the same standards as mainstream schools. Historically there have been problems finding a way forward in supporting students who do not fit in. What can be learnt from the history of working with students with SEBD is that they need a different approach. This theoretical framework offers an opportunity for development and learning.

The development of schools and policy making in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s meant that schools were brought much closer to the business world.

This was endorsed by the Prime Minister at the time (Margaret Thatcher), whose own policies encouraged competition (Morrison 1998). League tables for schools were born and competition was inevitable. There was more choice, diversity, quality control and information and efficiency, Morrison (1998) notes that competition is a prime mover in theories of complexity.

However, mainstream schools still saw the progress and management of their students in a more linear system. Turner (2004) reflects on linear programming in understanding institutional policy, and how linear approaches are set down in policy making by government and education. Examples of this linear approach are clear in that historically, students who do not fit to the policy and procedures laid down within mainstream schools failed and the students were deemed 'problem students'. The policies themselves however, were not described as problem policies. One clear example of the linear approach to policy making in mainstream school is the introduction, during the 1970's and 1980's, of 'integration'.

Arguably the most substantial call for integration was the Warnock Report (1978). Warnock reviewed education provision for 'handicapped' children at a time when special education provision had grown since 1944. Warnock dismissed the concept of handicap and extended the definition of special education to take in all children who may have individual education needs. This included those students with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties. One of the most important aspects of the Warnock Report was the recommendation that provision for special education should occur within mainstream schools. Prior to the Warnock Report, the Education Act of 1976 had attempted reform in relation to special education needs, but it was the Act of 1981 that provided a radical departure from previous trends and legislation. Integration, in terms of students with SEBD, failed almost immediately. Resources for those students with physical needs, hearing and visual impairment brought their own problems in terms of financial implications for changes to buildings. However, implications for integrating the SEBD were more complicated in that staff skills and the curriculum is where the biggest changes or development needed to be. This did not fit in with the demands of

the new approach to education which was academic success. Cooper (1999) recognised that SEBD in school was possibly a product of a number of factors, some of which arose from within the school, those factors within the school being the inflexible policy making – suggesting the linear approach used in schools, ‘do this and this will happen’ did not work.

The criteria for success and therefore being leaders in the competition brought the introduction of more assessment and measurable academic standards. League tables highlighted for example how many students achieved A\* - C grades in GCSE, student attendance and numbers of exclusions. This information is not just stored away from the eyes of the world but is an indicator to the world of success and failure and this in turn affects perceptions of schools and the choices that people make. In making themselves more competitive it was important that schools reported on their successes.

Schools, including PRUs, that support students with SEBD, if viewed within the framework of chaos and complexity, demonstrate that we need to reduce our expectations in terms of control as managers and how we operate. Gleick’s (1987) principles: small-scale changes in initial conditions, similar conditions can result in very dissimilar outcomes, regularity and uniformity break down to irregularity and diversity, long term prediction is impossible, effects are not straightforward continuous functions of causes would give us the tools to work more effectively with SEBD students.

Interaction between variables is often unknown to decision makers. As effective managers of students with SEBD we need a sense of our limitations. What this means is that the complex variables and issues that exist in the chaotic lives of those students with SEBD are often not known or imagined by the professionals that support them and the policy makers. This means that when we make judgements on the progress and achievement of these students we do so without all of the information, because we have not seen it. The criticism directed at ‘off-site units and PRUs may have come about because policy makers did not see SEBD provision as chaotic and complex

systems. In other words using a linear approach as opposed to non-linear approach used in chaos and complexity theory.

Those students who affected those performance indicators were being excluded or moved to special 'off-site units', in other words segregation, and not integration, and this became an increasing trend (Lloyd-Smith and Davies 1995). This is an example of how 'policy makers' were linear in their approach to the development of education during the 80's. In other words by putting this strategy in place, all students will move forward and achieve. However, in practice this did not work for all students and those who could not cope in the new era of academic competition fell outside the boundaries. Students' with SEBD have complex needs and have caused chaos in schools and to solve this problem SEBD students were excluded, segregated and forgotten, or at least nowhere to be seen on the league tables. These students also caused complex problems for the policy makers and became known as 'problem pupils'. Lloyd-Smith and Davies (1995) suggested that the circumstances and diversity of these students was such that no global label or theory would be likely to understand their needs. I agree that no global label is sufficient when working with and supporting these students but I do believe that recognising that these students' experiences and behaviours are chaotic and complex is how we move closer to understanding and addressing their needs and must be framed within a non-linear approach.

*Identifying a theoretical framework that shapes my thoughts and understanding was an important element of this study. This element of the study created in my thinking a confidence and a drive to take another step in this study. The next chapter asks key stakeholders their perceptions of what makes a successful PRU.*

## CHAPTER FIVE: KEY STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS

*Whenever we look for success within organisations current practise is to use a variety of critical input and responses for example peers, academics, inspectors and official bodies. The barometer in this study has been stakeholders at a number of levels who are linked to PRUs. For example, head teachers, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, other professionals and other agencies all linked to PRUs.*

*As I warmed up on the 'start line' of my study all I knew was that I wanted to learn more about PRUs. I have worked in the field of 'special education' for what seems a life time and clearly through that life time changes have taken place. One of the biggest changes is that we have a new school, a PRU. I work in a PRU but found that I had no real knowledge of the why or the when PRUs were created. I spoke to a number of professionals in the field of special education and asked what they knew about the history of PRUs, I found that most of my colleagues knew as much, or as little, about the development of PRUs as I did, some knew even less. However, colleagues I spoke to all commented on how 'people' did not understand PRUs and that PRUs are 'hard to work in or manage'. Feedback from inspection reports support the little knowledge that I and colleagues had about PRUs. PRUs are 'misunderstood', colleagues did not believe the hype that PRUs are the 'new thing' or that PRUs were going to change the world of working with students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.*

### 5.1 Introduction

Reports from inspection teams highlight little that is good but tell us a lot about what is poor in PRU e.g. accommodation, teaching and learning,



leadership and management, resources, quality of staff. More recent inspections in both England and Wales report improvements but criticism is still there. However, even with these criticisms local authorities are increasing numbers of PRUs while reducing other provision for students with SEBD i.e. special schools.

There has been little work in the area of PRU key stakeholders and none that has depth enough to offer great insight to the working world of the PRU. I believe that the perceptions of key stakeholders can 'hold a key' to us gaining important information and certainly contributing to this area of education. For this research I have identified key stakeholders as those professional who have a working relationship with PRUs, they include:

- PRU staff – heads / teaching staff / non teaching staff
- Members of Management Committees
- Mainstream school staff
- Other agency staff e.g. social workers, youth workers
- Psychologists
- Specialist teachers

## **5.2 Methodology**

I used qualitative methods to gather data. I asked key stakeholders what their perception was as to '*what makes a good PRU and what makes a bad PRU?*' I used questionnaires, face to face and telephone structured and semi-structured interviews, and meetings with whole staff teams. I analysed data and identified behaviour that key stakeholders perceived as essential in creating successful PRUs.

*On reflection I am not comfortable with this rigid division between qualitative and quantitative, does the divide suggest that one is better than the other, to some I think it will. This study has used both quantitative and qualitative methods of data gathering, which I believe is a combination of both of these methods. For example, the literature*

*analysed presents statistical as well as written documentation. However, findings are interpretative and therefore qualitative.*

Chaos and complexity theory meets the needs of the data collection and analyses of data of this chapter. The aim was gathering information from professional key stakeholders, to reflect on and analyse information gathered to identify emergent behaviour and emergent properties of PRUs.

I used qualitative methods of data collection to reflect on 'feedback' that identified emergent properties of the emergent behaviour that result in either a successful PRU or a failing PRU. Feedback analysed came from key stakeholders. Stakeholders provided their perceptions of the role of the PRU, what they perceived as effective PRUs, ineffective PRUs, and elements of what makes up an effective or ineffective PRU.

Tools used to gather this 'feedback' comes from qualitative methods of data collection e.g. reviewing OfSTED and Estyn annual reports, academic articles, media articles, questionnaires and interviews.

Issues of confidentiality were discussed with all respondents with many requesting that I did not identify them. I agreed with all respondents that I would shred all questionnaires and notes taken during face to face and telephone interviews. In addition to this I agreed I would create a code that would anonymise individuals and all data. The code (Appendix I) allows me, as the researcher, to identify each quote to a sample group, activity and year that the data was collected. For example code 3M06g:

- 3 represents that the quote came from a respondent from the sample group of key stakeholders from social services, or the Youth Offending Team or members of the management committee
- M tells me that gathered information during a meeting of more than three people
- 2006 is the year the quote was provided

- g is the seventh letter in the alphabet representing the seventh person in the meeting that provided feedback

Another example is 2q08d; here data is taken from a questionnaire completed by a teaching member of staff of a PRU, this could be a teacher or an instructor. Data was collected during 2008, the questionnaire is the fourth recorded returned questionnaire from this sample group (Appendix II).

Reviewing PRU inspections highlighted some issues or causes of failing PRUs, e.g. poor teaching and learning and issues surrounding leadership and management. For me this raised the question that if we put into the PRUs teachers who are experienced practitioners with good teaching skills would this result in PRUs turning around and becoming successful provision for students with SEBD or are there other properties essential to success?

I looked at PRUs as 'adaptive complex systems' with an environment that has obstacles that must be avoided, the 'boid' within this system is the PRU head teacher, with clear rules to follow. The emergent behaviour is the result of how the head teacher reacts and interprets feedback. Within the PRU the obstacles are the problems that have been identified by respondents from all sample groups as factors that affect the success or failure of a PRU:

- Qualities of head teacher
- Accommodation
- Funding
- Inexperienced staff
- Relationships with LEA and mainstream schools

Reynolds (1987) in his experiment produced obstacles that mirrored the life of real birds and created rules that would enable the boids (birds) to survive. The rules related to the real world, for example you have a greater chance of survival if you are part of a larger flock. Stay close to the flock, if you are too far away from the flock you can be picked off. Do not fly too close as this can cause confusion and agitation amongst the boids and so affect the overall behaviour of the flock.

Within the 'adaptive complex system' of the PRU, the head teacher must avoid the obstacles within the system. For example, if funding is poor this can affect staff morale, student progress and teaching and learning. However the boid (head teacher) must follow the rules set and behave in a way that avoids obstacles. Other obstacles such as accommodation, inexperienced staff, relationships with the LEA, relationships with mainstream schools within the environment will also affect staff and student behaviour, ethos, teaching and learning and student progress. What rules are set will control how the head teacher (the boid) manages these obstacles which will ultimately affect the resulting 'emergent behaviour'.

These principles or pre-suppositions are examples of philosophies that underpin good working practice for professionals supporting students with SEBD, particularly when working in a PRU. These pre-suppositions are essential in understanding and accepting that order (in this case behaviour) is not predetermined and fixed but complex, unstable and emergent.

### **5.3 Data Collection**

#### *Triangulation*

The effectiveness of eliciting information from any research that has validity depends on the data collection methods chosen by the researcher. The most common way to strengthen the validity is to use some form of triangulation of data collection (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995). The term 'triangulation' is originally linked to land surveyors; surveyors used three points to locate a position; however, in terms of research this number should not be taken literally (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Triangulation as an approach that uses two or more methods of data collection in order to compare and measure against for further validation of research findings, measuring the same thing from different perspectives.

However, critics argue against using triangulation as a method of data collection believing that to combine methods is inappropriate because each method is based on different theoretical positions, Blaikie (1991) cited in Robson (1994).

Denzin (1978) cited in Denzin and Lincoln (1994) highlights four basic methods of triangulation:

1. *data triangulation* – looking at a number of data sources in a study
2. *investigator triangulation* – this method uses different researchers or evaluators in the study
3. *theory triangulation* – the use of multiple perspectives used to interpret one set of data
4. *methodological triangulation* – the use of a variety of methods to study a single problem

The data collection method used in this phase of my study is *data triangulation*. What that means for this paper is that a number of different methods of collecting data have been used for example, questionnaire (e-mail and hard copy), semi-structured interviews over the telephone and semi-structured interviews face to face with small groups of no more than five participants.

#### *Qualitative versus Quantitative*

There are two main schools of thought, in terms of data collection: one is described or labelled as a positivistic, natural science based, hypothetical-deductive approach which tend to work with 'quantitative data'. The other is described as interpretative and ethnographic and research methods within this paradigm tend to work with 'qualitative' data. Differences between the qualitative and quantitative have become a 'caricature of the social sciences' (Yin 1993). Qualitative research is often characterised as being 'soft', interested in 'mushy' processes and dealing with evidence that is inadequate, whereas quantitative approach research is seen as 'hard-nosed', data driven and truly scientific. A further difference between the two methods is that quantitative methods of data collection are usually numeric or categorical. Findings can be analysed using statistical methods. This method is more likely to be objective and measurable. Qualitative data collection methods usually rely on words rather than numbers. This data can be collected through interviews, observation, surveys and documents. Clipson-Boyes (2000)

believes this method can provide real depth of exploration that often provides new and unexpected findings.

To further complicate the design and choice of data collection is the fact that there is no overall consensus as to which data collection methods are 'best'. I though see a clear link here with linear and non-linear theories, for example the quantitative approach to data I would suggest sits well with the linear approach whereas the qualitative data collection methods are more linked to qualitative approach.

**Table 4: Differences between quantitative and qualitative research methods**

Differences	Quantitative Research	Qualitative Research
Underlying ideas about reality	Reality is single and stable	Realities are multiple, complex and ever-changing
	Objective facts exist	
Aims	To make predictions	To explore phenomena and relationships
	To produce data that are generalisable to other situations	To promote understanding
Order of events	Sampling, data collection, data analysis	To produce description and theories that readers may find relevant to their own situations
Research techniques	Control, standardisation	Sampling, data collection and data analysis are concurrent
Research relationships	Relationships with 'subjects' must be limited and standardised to promote control and objectivity	Flexible, consistency
		Relationships with 'participants' are interactive
		The process and effects of interaction are often explored

### *Sampling*

Sampling is the process of selecting units (e.g., people, organizations) from a population of interest so that by studying the sample we may fairly generalize our results back to the population from which they were chosen.

A survey may be carried out by either a census or a sample from the population. In a census the entire population under study is used but in sampling only a proportion of the population is used. Sampling is used because sometimes it is not possible to survey the entire population.

Problems arise with sampling because wrong conclusions about the population as a whole may be drawn by studying information obtained from

only a fraction of the population. However, sampling has the following advantages over a census:

- it is cheaper because only a fraction of the population is surveyed
- it may be carried out more quickly than a census
- it can yield better information than can a census. This is because, when sampling, only a few interviewers are required whereas for a census many thousands may be used with the consequent difficulties of finding the right kind of personnel (Cohen and Holiday 1982, 1996)

If a population is small a census is preferable, for instance, in a survey of working conditions in a factory a census is better because the number of people working in the factory (the population) is comparatively small and easily accessible. However, this research is looking at the role of PRUs, I found staff working in PRUs were not easily accessible to the researcher.

Researchers must address issues of sampling early on in the planning of any research. The quality of a piece of research is not only judged by the methodology used but also by the suitability of the sample used. (Morrison 1993). Heiman (1999) describes a sample as a relatively small subset of the population selected to represent the overall population being studied. Researchers often need to gather information from smaller groups or subsets of the whole population because of various factors or restraints on time, expense and access to the whole population.

Bailey (1978) believes that there are differences between how sample selection is made by experienced and less experienced researchers. Experienced researchers will start with a total population and then work down to a sample, whereas a less experienced researcher tends to work from the 'bottom-up'.

Cohen and Holiday (1982, 1996) have discussed the two main methods of sampling; they are described or labelled as 'probability' and 'non-probability' sampling. The differences between the two are:

Probability sampling – the chance of every member of the wider or whole population being selected has the same chance

Non-probability sampling – selection for members of the population is not equal and may be excluded from the sample for reasons that include time, finance or the lack of the researchers' access to the whole population.

### *Probability Sampling*

- *Simple random sampling* – in simple random sampling all members of the whole population under study who have equal chance of being selected. This sample method involves selecting randomly from a list of the whole population
- *Systematic sampling* – this is a simplified form of random sampling, subjects are selected from the whole population in a systematic rather than random way.
- *Stratified sampling* – this method involves dividing the whole population into groups. Each group has subjects with similar characteristics.
- *Cluster sampling* – when a population of a study is widely dispersed it may not be practical to select randomly from the whole population. Time and finances could easily be wasted travelling from subject to subject. Cluster sampling means selecting a specific number of groups of the population and testing the whole population in those groups or clusters.

### *Non-probability Sampling*

- *Quota sampling* – this method attempts to have representations of the different elements of the whole population. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (1994) provides an example of researchers who are interested in race relations in a specific community and set a quota for each ethnic group that is proportionate to the whole population.
- *Purposive sampling* – when using this method of sampling, the researcher handpicks subjects to be included in the sample based on the researchers' judgement of the typical. Researchers are therefore able to develop a sample that meets their specific needs.



- *Dimensional sampling* – Robson (1994) describes dimensional sampling as an extension of quota sampling.
- *Convenience sampling* - is obtained when the researcher elects whatever sampling units are conveniently available. For example a teacher may use select students from his class.
- *Snowball sampling* – this method involves the researcher selecting individuals form a population of interest and using the individual as informants to identify other members of the population and then they also are used as informants of other individuals

This study used sample methods that are described as a 'non-probability' sample. The samples used 'convenience sampling' and 'snowball sampling'. Convenience sampling involves choosing or selecting the nearest, hence the most convenient, individuals of the whole population to study. Cohen and Manion 1994 described teachers and students as captive audiences and therefore often good examples of respondents for 'convenience sampling'. 'Snowball sampling' involves the researcher selecting individuals from a population of interest and using the individuals as informants to identify other members of the population and then they also are used as informants of other individuals (Cohen and Manion 1994). The original intention was just to use a 'convenience sample', but many of the participants contacted me and said that they had discussed the questions with other colleagues, many times from different part of the country and these other respondents asked if they could contribute. Very soon I found I had a much wider contribution to the data, which has provided a wider perspective in that participants with different professional roles, (although still working with and supporting staff and students in PRUs) were keen to contribute. During this first phase of my research over 120 respondents, from different sample groups, contributed to the final data collected.

*On reflection I now ask myself if 'sampling' as a method of data collection is the way forward for a chaos and complexity approach. What is clear from the chaos and complexity approach is that one opinion, although*

*different from the many others, can greatly influence outcomes, something I experienced during this study, and is further discussed in Chapter six.*

### *Questionnaires*

The questionnaire is the most commonly used approach to data collection. It is seen to be an easy instrument to administer and provides direct information of facts and attitudes (McKernan 1996).

A questionnaire may be used to introduce a particular idea or even pave the way for new ideas (McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead, 1996). This research has used a chaos and complexity theoretical framework to identify emergent behaviour and properties in PRUs. For the researcher this is a 'new idea', and the questionnaire offered opportunities for the researcher to encourage 'new thinking' in the participants.

The first questionnaire I drafted was trialled with a small sample group, the group was made up of seven people, two non teaching staff, two PRU head teachers and three other agency workers. I redrafted the questionnaire after analysing feedback. All respondents from this small sample group identified the PRU head teacher's behaviours and characteristics as a main factor to a successful PRU. The respondents clearly had a similar view about a particular factor that was important to a successful PRU. I felt that I needed to learn more, I added a further question:

- What three management characteristics do you think a PRU Head should have?

The final questionnaire (appendix III) consisted of two sections. The first section was used to gather biographical information. The overall findings may suggest that this information did not offer any difference in perspectives but the information was gathered as a possible further tool to analyse feedback e.g. sample group, professional role and key stage PRU supporting. The second section was designed with open-ended questions. An advantage of using open-ended questions is that this type of question invites, from the participant, honest and personal comments that may contain the 'gems' of

information that may not have been caught otherwise (Oppenheim 1998). I found the use of open questions essential in providing opportunities for respondents to reflect and add depth to the data collected. There were though disadvantages of using 'open-ended questions', they were time consuming for myself and the participant. The initial draft of the first questionnaire had a number of closed questions, respondents could just tick a box, but I felt this did not provide the respondent with the opportunity to relate to their own perspectives and experiences but just to respond to mine. I therefore created a simple questionnaire with no closed questions but gave respondents opportunity to consider their own experiences and perceptions.

Questions asked were:

- From your experiences what do you perceive as a successful PRU?
- From your own experiences and your perception what do you think hinders the success of a PRU?
- From your experiences what do you think needs to be in place that creates a good PRU?
- From your own experience what do you perceive as a failing PRU?
- What do you think hinders the success of a PRU?
- From your list what do you perceive as the most important element that enables a successful PRU, and why?
- What three management characteristics do you think a PRU Head should have?

I was keen to be clear to respondents that I wanted their personal experiences. Virtually every individual can recount an incident in their school years and professional life when they were directly or indirectly affected by the behaviour of those students who cause chaos in the classroom. The consequences of these incidents lead those involved to view students with social, emotional and behaviour problems in their own way.

Lewin (1936) looked at the employees' perception of politics in organisations. They state clearly that these perceptions, whether real or not are of importance to organisations. The perceptions individuals hold influence the

way they do their jobs, perceptions affect individuals' feelings (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). Individuals' perceptions of an organisation determine how a working environment will be (Ferris, Fedor, Chachere, & Pondy, 1989).

This thesis supports the belief that how PRUs are perceived by their key stakeholders will affect the effectiveness and 'productivity' of the PRU role in the wider organisation of education. This paper uses the term 'perception' as the views that individuals express about knowledge, experience and understanding of PRUs.

### *Interviews*

The research interview should be a two way conversation, the interview should be like a conversation with a purpose, a situation where one person talks and the other listens. Nothing could be easier as we do it all the time (Robson 1994). A main advantage of using the interview was that it was flexible and an adaptable way of finding out things. I found the interview had a main advantage over the questionnaire in that I had the opportunity to probe areas of interest. However, a clear disadvantage is that interviewing can be time consuming and bias can be difficult to rule out.

I used two types of interview technique; the semi-structured interview and the unstructured interview:

*Semi-structured interview* – with semi-structured interviews there is an element of less structure. The approach by the interviewer is similar to having a shopping list of topics from which they want to get responses (Robson 1994). I conducted telephone interviews with participants who provided contact details on returned questionnaires. I also conducted telephone interviews with respondents from the snowball sample.

*Unstructured Interview* – unstructured interviews have a starting point but no set agenda or questions. In this style of interview issues or topics to be discussed can be left entirely to the interviewee. When an interviewee has touched on an issue the interviewer can ask the interviewee to further expand or explain (Oppenheim 1998). I carried out six unstructured interviews with small groups of participants. These took place in staff meetings and also

during an annual conference organised by the National Organisation of PRUs. On each occasion I explained to the group my research aim and discussed issues relating to the experience of the research and participants expectations of findings.

In summary, this study used qualitative research within a chaos and complexity framework. I used reflection and feedback as tools for identifying emergent behaviour and emergent properties of the life and management of PRUs. Data collection was over a period of 12 months using six methods of data collection:

- questionnaires sent to a 'convenient sample' through the post
- questionnaires sent to 'snowball sample' through the post
- questionnaires from prus.org.uk website
- questionnaires completed by participants attending a national annual conference for PRU staff
- structured interviews with six teams including PRUs staff and social workers – during these interviews I used the questions already identified in the questionnaire, I did not use any add on question for example what do you mean or do you have an example
- semi-structured interviews over the phone with key stakeholders, including educational psychologists, Youth Offending staff, HMI inspectors, social workers, mainstream head teachers, teachers and SENCOs, youth workers and PRU staff teaching and non-teaching – during these interviews I used the questionnaires used on the questionnaire but asked for further explanation or examples

#### **5.4 Findings**

During this stage of data collection over 120 respondents, from different sample groups, contributed to the final data collected.

*I want to be clear here that feedback from the sample groups is only the opinion of those who have contributed and not the opinion of the whole population. I do feel confident that these findings do represent the majority of the sample groups but of course there will always be*

*exceptions to the rule. Those exceptions must be considered if I am to reflect on the findings within a chaos and complexity framework, I believe I have done this.*

**Table 5: Responses to Questionnaires**

PRU Heads	PRU Teaching Staff	YOT SS Management Committee (excluding carers and students)	PRU Non Teaching Staff LSAs Youth Workers	LEA Officers EPs Advisors Behaviour Support Teachers	Mainstream Teaching Staff (including head teachers, SENCOs teachers)
84%	52%	42%	40%	22%	10%
54 sent 45 returned	92 sent 48 returned	38 sent 16 returned	25 sent 10 returned	27 sent 6 returned	30 sent/3 returned

(Sample Information Appendix III)

In collating responses it soon became clear I needed to establish two types of PRU provision, KS4 PRUs as one type of provision and Primary and KS3 PRUs as the second type of provision. Overwhelmingly what was identified as a successful Primary and KS3 PRU was one where students returned to mainstream school after a short period of intervention. Respondents were clear that at this stage of education a successful PRU provided short term intervention, supported students to improve their behaviour and to return to their mainstream school or be supported to integrate into a new mainstream school.

However, at KS4 PRUs integration into college or work was seen as more appropriate routes for older students. Also at this key stage respondents were clear that students should have the opportunity for a more settled period of education as students prepare for the wider world. KS4 provision was perceived as a 'long-term' provision. It was felt that for those students working toward accreditation, long-term provision was seen to be a good

example of providing equity of opportunities between PRU students and mainstream students, long term provision offered stability during a time when students were preparing for the academic qualifications that would enable students to fit into the world of work.

*This study focuses on key stakeholders and their perception of what makes some PRUs more successful than other PRUs. With this in mind it is their perception of what makes a successful PRU which is relevant to this research and has led this research. Key stakeholders I approached were very keen to participate in this study and welcomed the opportunities to contribute in the first phase of the study as individuals. Later when the data was in the analysis stage I was struck by their willingness to 'get their voices heard', persuading me at the PRU National Conference (July 2007) to run longer sessions than planned as respondents were so keen to share their experiences and views with myself and each other. Respondents knew that their responses would be contributing to this study. I was happy to be led by them to see what transpired.*

*Prior to the conference I had considered triangulating my data through producing a more formal questionnaire based on literature on successful organisations i.e. focusing on the PRU as an organisation. This would have given me some professional confidence or protection in facing a large audience of my peers. However, that approach would have made this a different piece of work. The key stakeholders would have been guided or directed to measure success through the eyes of others, this would have not been a true reflection of their personal and professional experiences of PRUs. Their engagement and energy at this point made me confident I*

*was right in taking this approach and I believe resulting in a, true reflection of what they had to say.*

### **5.5 PRU Head Teacher / PRU Manager / Head of Centre / PRU Teacher-in-Charge** *(this group also included acting heads)*

The variety of titles given to those who manage and lead PRUs was an indicator of the different responses to questions asked; for those working in the role of day-to-day responsibility of PRUs. I have adopted the generic title 'head teacher' throughout this paper. From the responses I have identified 'themes' that emerged from each of the sub-groups of the sample contacted.

For PRU head teachers an example of a perceived successful PRU is a PRU where there was an ethos that was clear and understood by students and staff. During further discussions with head teachers I asked them to give examples of what they believed described a good ethos and how an ethos is developed.

I interviewed head teachers from Primary and Secondary PRUs. The experience of the head teacher varied, some had been in post for many years others were newly appointed head teachers. In terms of what a good ethos should be, all head teachers gave a very similar reply, there did not appear to be any link with length of service or experience:

- *"....a good PRU has a staff team that is committed to the same thing, an ethos where staff and students respect each other...." (1qc06a)*
- *"...an ethos will be successful when everyone believes the same thing....." (1M07d)*
- *"...a good ethos is one where everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet..." (1m06c)*
- *"...a commitment to us all working together..." (1qc06d)*

However, as discussions developed and I asked respondents what properties an ethos should contain, who was responsible for developing the ethos, taking forward and monitoring the PRU ethos, a clear divide in the responses did appear. Responses fell into two groups. The first group was very 'outspoken'



in their response. They were clear in their position about who was responsible; there was a clear indication of ownership.

- *“...the head has to develop the ethos, only they can take it forward...the ethos should highlight the need to work in partnership with carers, students and staff...” (1m06a)*
- *“...it should talk about the need to work together in partnership, as well as highlight good teaching and learning....PRUs usually have small staff teams so there is little opportunity for a senior management team that usually means the head has to do it...” (1M07a)*
- *“...of course you have to discuss ideas with your staff, but at the end of the day it’s down to you as the head to take things forward...clear approaches to discipline and expectations...” (1M07d)*
- *“...I believe that the head has to lead the creation of the ethos or philosophy of the PRU....language that demonstrates a sensitivity and understanding of the needs of the students...” (1m06e)*

The second group of head teachers in this sample was less ‘outspoken’ in its response during discussions. This second group were again clear about what properties a good ethos should have but were less clear or confident about who takes responsibility.

- *“...an ethos must have clear expectations for staff and students... well I don’t think that any one person has the lead, it comes from all the staff...I think it’s down to the LEA to monitor...” (1M06b)*
- *“...when I came into post there was a written philosophy in place, it’s in all the documents...the ethos is clear about what we aim to do... all the staff have to monitor it...” (1m07a)*
- *“...the management committee are responsible for creating and monitoring the PRU ethos... it’s up to them what they want ....we can’t then be criticised by inspection teams...” (1m06c)*

In the first group, head teachers talked about being the ‘leader’ and appeared to take responsibility or ownership for developing and taking forward the ethos and personality of the PRU. From this first group, head teachers appeared more agreeable about me meeting their teams; this group of head teachers

provided me with good opportunities to meet with their staff. There were also a higher percentage of responses to questionnaires sent out from teaching and non-teaching staff from this type of head teacher.

In the second group of head teachers it was established the ethos was a 'shared' responsibility in that they talked about the whole team creating an ethos, which of course does demonstrate a 'collaborative' leadership style. However, they did not identify themselves as the 'head' taking a lead role in this essential element of a PRU.

Being committed to the same ethos is, of course, essential. However this can only be achieved if your ethos is worded clearly and easy for all to understand, students as well as staff. A good ethos is one that focuses on high quality of teaching and learning and a commitment by staff to be diverse in using a variety of approaches to support students. At this stage it was not clear which 'type' of head teacher has a more successful PRU. However, this is an area that will be reviewed later in this paper.

PRU head teachers saw qualified mainstream and SEBD experienced teachers as essential elements of a successful PRU. Head teachers talked about the number of instructors that were being used in PRUs, they felt that the number of unqualified teaching staff in PRUs was a concern as this use of unqualified staff is not mirrored in mainstream schools. Head teachers said that the use of instructors to deliver vocational teaching sessions such as CDT, art or domestic science was felt to be more acceptable. However, unqualified staff delivering more academic curriculum subjects such as English, Maths, Science and Humanities was clearly a concern for them and perceived as a hindrance to successful PRUs:

- *"...give us the right resources, not just books but staff, we can really move our students forward...you don't see instructors teaching maths and English in a mainstream school, why should our students be different..." (1M07b)*
- *"...this is not to say that instructors can't do a good job, if they had a good degree with excellent knowledge they can often do well... in a*

*mainstream school someone in this sort of position would be able to access the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP)... they would receive a programme of support and development....they can't so this sort of programme in a PRU...really we should not be able to employ instructors into a PRU post..." (1m06a)*

- *"...I think there are two problems we face... the quality of teachers in post who sometimes have been there for a life time... the other problem we have is when we do have vacancies it is so difficult attracting good quality teachers to work in PRUs ..." (1M07g)*

There was a lot of discussion from Heads about the quality of permanent staff in post:

- *"...it's not as bad as it used to be but for a long time teachers who were struggling were often redeployed to units...a lot of these staff are still working in PRUs...they couldn't hack it in mainstream how on earth can they cope with our students..."(1m06a)*

This sort of response was not isolated. A number of head teachers felt that when they were setting up the PRU they did not have opportunities to 'select' staff. Head teachers felt that poor quality staff were very often re-deployed to PRUs, this was felt to be a major factor in the quality of staff working in the PRU.

Head teachers were clear about what they perceived as good quality staff:

- *"...staff have to want to work in a PRU..." (1m06a)*
- *"...they must be prepared and have experience of working with SEBD students prior to coming to work in a PRU... I don't mean just having a qualification I mean hands on work..." (1M07d)*
- *"...have experience of working under pressure and still remembering that we are working with children..." (1m06b)*
- *"...the ability not to take things personally .... some of the things you get called can be upsetting, but you have to be able to see past it and take on board that these outbursts are usually because a kid is in defence mode..." (1M07f)*

- *“...a gossip in the team will cause problems ... this sort of person spends more time criticising others instead of reflecting on their own performance...” (1M07e)*
- *“...someone who is reflective, someone who looks at what they could have done differently instead of placing blame on others...” (1t06a)*
- *“...being prepared to improve their own skills... not just taking part in training but using what they have learnt...” (1t06c)*

‘Loyalty’ was the most used characteristic head teachers felt as an essential quality staff members should possess. However, when asked ‘loyalty to what and who’ there was a difference in responses.

One group of heads talked about loyalty to the head:

- *“...staff should be loyal to the Head, without this how can Heads trust their staff...”(1M07e)*
- *“...some staff think they should be the head, some times they are in competition with the Head, and their loyalty is placed somewhere else...” (1m06a)*

This group of head teachers saw the role of loyalty coming from the staff. On the flip side the other group of heads talked about loyalty differently, this second group of head teachers recognised that loyalty did not come with a title but was something that had to be developed:

- *“...you will always struggle if your team is not loyal to you, but you’ve got to earn or develop it, you also have got to be loyal to them...” (1M06e)*
- *“...loyalty is really just trust, they have to trust you and you have to trust them, but this has to be a two way thing...” (1t07e)*
- *“...a loyal team works together...” (1M06e)*
- *“... you have to stand by your staff and help them move forward, if you are not loyal to them they will feel insecure and that leads to disloyal staff...” (1t06b)*

It was not clear at this stage which of these two groups had the most 'loyal' staff team or if loyalty is in fact a major factor in a successful PRU. However, as part of the coding process of the questionnaires I clearly identified these staff teams for further investigation.

PRU head teachers also felt they faced difficulties in attracting good quality teachers because of the reputation that PRUs often had. One head teacher explained how there had been times they had managed a PRU with supply teachers:

- *"...in the whole term I was the only teacher who had a permanent contract; two of my teachers had left to go to other posts and one teacher was on long term sick...we had interviewed but there was no quality so we decided to advertise again..." (1t06e)*

Head teachers found that they were offering NQTs supply teacher contracts. These NQTs worked at the PRUs for sometimes up to two years but were unable to employ an NQT as a permanent teacher. Some head teachers reported that they felt that they had worked hard to support the NQTs as supply teachers. After a long period of temporary contracts they had often developed into good teachers but because PRUs are not officially schools NQTs could not be offered a permanent contract.

- *"it really doesn't make sense to me, on the one hand NQTs can't be employed in PRUs but they can go onto the supply teacher list and we can use supply teachers, this means we often have NQTs working in PRUs...the problem for these NQTs is that they can't access the county's NQT development programmes, its frustrating for them..." (1M07g)*

The frustrations about the place of NQTs in PRUs voiced by these head teachers are of course understandable; however, the role of the NQT in the PRU is I believe a sensible one. Working with students with SEBD is a challenging role even to the most experienced and we need to support our young professionals; expectations that all NQTs should manage

in this difficult environment would not be helpful to the development of these teachers.

Over 70% of head teachers highlighted appropriate funding as an essential factor of a successful PRU. There was though a clear divide of experience and perception on funding, or lack of funding, surrounding PRUs. Some head teachers were aware of the budgets attached to the PRU they managed, they were budget holders and held responsible for spending. Other head teachers had not been involved with any financial planning for the PRU and the LEA were strict guardians of the budgets.

Funding for PRUs is in competition with funding for provision for hearing impaired students, visually impaired students, speech and language support and every other provision that provides extra support to students and schools are all in the same funding void: there are no delegated budgets for PRUs. One difference between PRUs and other support services is that many students are 'dually registered'; students remain on role at their mainstream school but attend the PRU. In terms of the 'dually registered' students this often leads to difficulty between LEAs and mainstream school. Schools continue to receive funding for students who remain on the role of their schools, LEAs have to negotiate with the school to 're-charge' for these students to support the running of the PRU.

What this means for the PRU head teacher is their budget is generally managed by the LEA. However, a proportion of PRU head teachers are given a clear budget and are responsible for providing a service within the allocated budget. This budget is usually set against planned places at the PRU. After discussion it was clear that the head teachers who managed budgets were the head teachers leading larger PRUs.

The head teachers where the LEA managed budgets expressed frustrations that suggested they lacked information, their comments suggested there was a 'them and us' situation;

- *“...if we didn’t always have to do everything on the cheap and cut corners then we would do a better job at meeting the needs of students...I have to fight for every thing...” (1M07d)*
- *“...I have to fight for every pen...I’m not told anything about the budget, the LEA just gives me a small budget for essentials but they manage the overall budget, I am not part of that side of things...” (1m06e)*

Head teachers felt they were being kept in the dark: *“...if you asked me how much this PRU cost every year I couldn’t tell you...I’m kept out of the loop...” (1M07d)*. I asked this group of head teachers if they had attempted to talk to LEA officers about budgetary issues or asked for opportunities to develop their understanding of issues. Some said that they found this difficult:

- *“...to tell you the truth I’ve got so much going on I can’t be bothered...” (1t06d)*
- *“...I have tried to do this but it’s like they don’t want me to know...maybe they think I will ask too many questions...” (1m06e)*

Most of the head teachers however, were keen to do this; they saw learning more about budget management as an opportunity to further their own professional development:

- *“...I have met with my line manager....we have agreed that I would spend time with the county accountant to get a better handle on the issues...” (1t06b)*

The head teachers who managed their own budgets expressed different frustrations, but again focused on the LEA:

- *“...I sometimes think they think I am some sort of magician...if I want to develop anything I am supposed to magic the money from nowhere...” (1m06f)*
- *“...I have found this element of my job very difficult, I didn’t have enough training in this area, in fact I had no training... it is difficult we are not funded in the same way as a special school so money is often tight...” (1m06a)*

- *“...the LEA doesn’t provide us with the same funding levels as a special school, this affects staffing levels as well as resources...” (1t07e)*

Most of the head teachers I spoke to, head teachers who managed budgets and those where LEAs managed budgets, did not demonstrate awareness of the PRU funding system and the LEA was perceived to be the cause of the difficulties. During discussions with these head teachers they did not reflect on the wider issues of funding PRUs. It is difficult to make a judgment about whether this group of heads teachers’ lack of reflection was a result of being ill informed or not having investigated funding issues further but head teachers did make this issue someone else’s responsibility; the LEA’s.

A very small percentage of head teachers did however talk about ways they could improve funding:

- *“...really our difficulties are because of the whole funding system... I now offer training to schools and other agencies and get extra funding that way...” (1m06a)*
- *“...its no good shouting and moaning about it you’ve got to work with what you’ve got...you’ve got to look for other ways, I’ve looked at national grants available, there is money out there if you look for it, the mainstreams schools do it, I’ve learnt that...” (1t07e)*

Clearly funding for PRUs is an issue, and of course poor funding will lead to difficulties in quality of staff and resources. However, it is difficult to find a solution that does not include central government making changes to policy. The recent NBAR (2008) looks at this issue in Wales. Recommendation 11 of the Report stated the Welsh Assembly should commission studies to examine:

- *‘...how PRUs are funded, the purpose of PRUs and their strategies for the management of pupils, securing their attendance and changing their behaviour and how they enable pupil to achieve and reach their full potential...’ (NBAR 2008:139).*



Head teachers were clear that an essential element of a successful PRU was a positive and supportive relationship between PRUs and LEA Officers, other agencies and mainstream schools. Head teachers were loud and clear about this, over 80% of responses reported:

- *“...a supportive relationship with the LEA and mainstream schools leads to a more effective PRU...” (1qc06a)*
- *“...we all need to be singing of the same hymn sheet...” (1qp06a)*

It was not a surprise to receive such a high percentage of responses from staff working in PRUs, as this may have been seen as an opportunity for those on the ‘front-line’ to ‘have their say’. However, the poor responses from mainstream teachers and LEA Officers were disappointing to other respondents. I was asked many times by PRU staff if mainstream schools and LEA officers were taking part in this research, as they felt this was an opportunity for them to learn what school ‘really thought of them’. I kept all informed of the percentages of questionnaires returned and percentage of those willing to take part in semi-structured interviews. Many PRU staff voiced disappointment about the low responses from mainstream schools and LEA Officers, *“...what else did you expect...” (1m06b)*, *“...typical lack of interest in what we do...” (1m06f)*. The low response may support PRU head teachers’ perception of poor relationships between PRUs and mainstream schools and LEA officers.

I asked head teachers to describe elements or properties of what they perceived as a ‘positive and supportive relationship with mainstream schools and the benefits from these relationships.

- *“...we don’t want to try and reinvent the wheel... mainstream schools have got larger teams with a larger pool of expertise...” (1t07a)*
- *“...staff from mainstream schools can provide guidance and support for developing the curriculum...” (1t06b)*
- *“...if the schools tell us what they want from us we could meet their expectations...” (1M06d)*
- *“...our aim is to return students to mainstream school, if we had more information from them about their curriculum we could make a better*

*job at developing students' individual education plans and prepare kids better for their return...we are not only about managing behaviour..." (1M06e)*

- *"...students should only come to us for behaviour issues; if we are able to keep them following the same curriculum topics they have a better chance of success when they return..." (1M07d)*
- *"...staff from schools visiting students at the PRUs, even just taking part in student reviews, this would make it easier for kids to return..."(1t07g)*
- *"...celebrating student progress and generally keeping a sense of responsibility for the students..." (1m06g)*

Many head teachers described 'abdication of responsibility' by schools and LEAs as a hindrance to their work. They discussed feelings of frustration at how students were sometimes placed at the PRU, and then 'forgotten':

- *"...Its so frustrating, we all know that the PRU is supposed to be a service that supports students back into mainstream schools but the LEA and the schools just ignore that, when kids get a place here who everyone knows will never return to mainstream, they just forget about them..." (1m06g)*

During discussion with head teachers it was clear that this behaviour by LEA officers and mainstream school staff was a major cause of criticism from OfSTED and Estyn. Many believed that because PRUs were not allowed by LEAs to perform the official role of the PRU, a revolving door provision, a short stay provision, that inspection teams would always report that PRUs were not effective:

- *"...its hard when you are being judged by one set of standards from the inspection team, they want to see kids reintegrated back into schools, but we've got students here who have been with us two years and before us they were in the primary PRU...we have no chance of being judged as good..." (1m07a)*

When asked why they thought they were working with students who were placed with them long-term, staff and head teachers were clear:

- *“...we’re a cheaper option...” (1m06g)*
- *“...there isn’t special school provision in the county...” (1t07b)*
- *“...it just comes back to money; it costs a lot to send students to a special school...” (1t07a)*

This of course is only the perception of the PRU head teachers; it was not the aim of this researcher to investigate with the LEA the reasons for students being placed at PRUs long-term.

The sense of being ‘forgotten’ and ‘abdication’ was also linked to the head teachers’ perceived status of the PRU in the LEA and the lack of professional development opportunities for PRU staff. Good relationships with LEA officers and other agencies meant to the head teachers appropriate training for staff, good professional development opportunities, members of the Management Committee spending time at the PRU, appropriate targets and expectations of staff.

The most frequently voiced example of good relationships with LEA officers was appropriate referrals to the PRUs. Head teachers felt that when the spectrum of needs of the students were sensitively considered and appropriate referrals made to the PRUs there were more opportunities for students, and therefore PRU success.

Inappropriate referrals are seen by the head teachers as a major hindrance to PRUs. One head teacher said:

- *“...being used as a dumping ground for pupils who cannot ‘fit-in’ anywhere else will hinder development...we can’t do every thing for every one... we just can’t meet all the needs of the students sent to us, if we had SEBD students then fine we could manage, or if we were just sent students with mental health problems we could do that as well but mixing them doesn’t work, they wouldn’t put blind students and deaf students together with only the tools to teach the physically disabled....” (1M06a)*

All the head teachers I met and spoke with raised the issue of referrals. I asked what they perceived as appropriate referrals;

- *“...that will depend on the type of PRU you are supposed to be...” (1t07a)*
- *“...I manage an EBD PRU, but there is a divide in that title, you have students with behaviour problems that can be described as outward or inward behaviour...students who struggle in mainstream because of anxiety, phobia or introvert and then those who are verbally and physically challenging...the two should not be placed together, they have different emotional and learning needs...we just can't do it, when you try and tell the LEA the student isn't suitable there's no support...” (1t07b)*
- *“...students who are able to be reintegrated...there's no chance with some sent to us...” (1m06g)*

The frustration and concern about referrals came from all head teachers who felt that their ability to be a successful PRU was often undermined by the diverse mix of students they worked with. However, for some head teachers comments were sympathetic as opposed to criticism:

- *“...I understand that students need support but PRUs have small staff teams, we don't have the expertise amongst staff to cater for such a wide continuum of needs... it's the kids that suffer in the end...” (1m06f)*
- *“...it's the parents and students you feel for, when you have to use different strategies and teaching styles to support different needs, students get confused, because of their own difficulties students don't have the skills or awareness to understand the needs of others... someone is going to suffer...” (1m06a)*

The diversity of the needs of children and young people being placed in PRUs is greater than any other educational provision. One PRU could be expected to support students with specific learning difficulties (see preface) as well as SEBD, mental health and medical issues. It is not uncommon for one PRU to be instructed to cater for students with opposing difficulties, for example students with internalised emotional difficulties and those students with externalised behaviour. *“...for some this means the 'bullies' placed in the*

*same provision as the 'bullied', this is a situation that should not be possible, but in PRUs your voice is not always listened to..." (1t07g)*

Generally special education provision would be specific about the area of special education the provision was designed to provide support to, for example a SEBD school, STF for speech and language difficulties or simply provision for students who become pregnant and no longer able to attend mainstream school. The PRU head teacher may find themselves supporting students with a variety of needs, a problem not as common amongst head teachers of the main stream schools.

PRU head teachers also discussed the quality of those who sit on Management Committees and the lead LEA Officer who had direct line-management of PRUs. PRU head teachers felt that that day-to-day management of a PRU had difficulties but when the LEA Officer, who has direct contact or responsibility on a LEA level, has no experience of working in a PRU, an EBD Special School, or even experience of working in the mainstream with small groups of students with SEBD, difficult relationships were inevitable. PRU head teachers spoke about the lack of understanding of life within such a specialised environment which can create obstacles to partnership working:

- *"...I have worked in three PRUs...none of the PRUs I have worked in has had an LEA officer link person who has worked in a PRU...two were educational psychologists and one had come up through the ranks of teacher advisor...not one of them had experience of working with groups of difficult kids...they just didn't understand the environment...they related everything to their experiences, which was one-to one teaching..." (1M06a)*
- *"...being Head of English in a school suggests that you were at sometime a teacher of English, that is not the case with PRUs and the LEA...too often people who are appointed into LEA positions have no experience of being a Head Teacher of a PRU...that can't be good for us or them..." (1m06f)*

## **5.6 PRU Teaching Staff**

This group included qualified teachers as well as instructors. There was no clear divide as to subjects taught by qualified teachers and instructors. Instructors were involved in the delivery of core subjects; English, Maths, Science and Humanities, and teachers with responsibility for CDT, Art, PE and vocational courses. Not all respondents identified their role as qualified teacher or instructor so it was inappropriate in terms of accuracy of feedback to create two subgroups e.g. qualified teachers and instructors. I have therefore collated the data from all respondents as one group.

I collated data from this group from questionnaires, discussions with whole teaching teams and individual telephone discussions. The responses to the questionnaires were generally broad, making it difficult to find many common issues. I did not use my own teaching staff as respondents in this sample group. Many teaching staff were new to PRU teaching and I was keen to avoid staff feeling under pressure to provide responses they thought I might want to read.

A number of respondents appeared to take the opportunity to 'vent' frustration or dislike of their head teacher:

- *"...an example of a good PRU is where there is respect, my head or the kids don't know what that means..."* (2qp06d)
- *"...our PRU would be great if they got rid of the head..."* (2qp06k)

I did not believe that this was the forum for this type of comment. However, this type of response did support comments made by head teachers about the quality of teaching staff that they perceive as a hindrance to a successful PRU. When meeting with respondents or speaking on the telephone with respondents this behaviour did not appear. There were of course themes from this group but one theme most prominent was 'leadership', even from those respondents who complained about the head teacher they worked with.

Poor team work and lack of commitment within the team was seen by PRU teaching staff as a factor of a failing PRU, teaching staff saw these difficulties as a result of staff who are not experienced:

- *“...lack of appropriately trained staff...this leads to unmotivated staff...”* (2qc06d)
- *“...when you get staff who don't know what they're doing they struggle and this leads to problems...”* (2qp06j)

I discussed with staff opportunities for training that would lessen this issue:

- *“...Well that's another problem...”* (2M07d)

Staff saw this as a two-prong issue, the first part was motivation:

- *“...we are still working with staff that come from the 'old school' type of working with SEBD students...”* (2M06a)

Staff felt that this type of teacher did not want to change their approach to SEBD teachers,

- *“...they can't cope with the change in expectations...we are no longer babysitters we have to teach...”* (2M06a)
- *“...we are often stuck with the old PRU traditional thinker...they can't do anything so why waste time trying to teach them...”* (2M07d)

Discussions with PRU staff also identified the issue of expectations. PRU teaching staff were clear that working in a PRU was unique and often staff applying for posts did so without understanding the behaviour of the PRU.

- *“...people apply for posts with the wrong expectations...they have a bit of experience in a mainstream school working with the more difficult students but it's not always enough and they find themselves out of their depth...”* (2M07c)

It was unclear if the staff who completed the questionnaire and those I met with were discussing issues that related to their own performance or placing the issue with others. I did ask staff about how they felt when they first began their teaching role in PRUs.

- *“..I think most people struggle when they first teach in a PRU, but some of us look for ways to improve our own skills... some don’t...” (2t06a)*
- *“...it’s not easy when you first start...but when you know you have to recognise in your self if you can cope, if you can’t you’ve got to move on...too many teachers don’t and that affects the whole team...” (2M06b)*

It was clear that PRU teaching staff perceived a successful PRU as a PRU with a particular type of PRU head. From questionnaires, telephone discussions and discussions with staff teams, teaching staff were clear that the most important property of a successful PRU was a ‘strong’ head.

- *“...strong leadership skills...” (2qc06a)*
- *“...model of own views...” (2qc06c)*
- *“...strength...” (2qp06f)*
- *“...manage difficult and challenging situations...” (2qpcg)*
- *“...create a strong ethos...” (2qp06m)*

This places a lot of responsibility on just one person, I believe too much responsibility. I asked staff to expand on why this role was being perceived by them as the pivot role in the success or failure of a PRU.

- *“...I’m not saying that they are the only reason that a PRU works, but they are the main player and should be....if they’re not in control then either there is chaos because there is no leader or another member of staff will try and take control and that causes chaos because no-one knows who is in charge...” (2M07a)*
- *“...I’ve worked with a Head that is not in control and everyone feels insecure, no-one feels safe, kids are all over the place and staff are moaning and back stabbing, I now work with a Head that is in control.... kids and staff know the boundaries, things get done, I know I feel safer...” (2M06c)*

I asked teaching staff if they thought the Head needed help or support to create or maintain this style of management, and if it was appropriate that one person to have the responsibility of the success or failure of a PRU:



- *“Of course they should have support from all of us, all the PRU staff, other agencies and the LEA, but if they don’t have this sort of character they can’t survive...” (2M07d)*
- *“...they will only gain support and respect from everyone if they have these characteristics in the first place... this doesn’t mean they have to go around shouting the odds...” (2M06b)*
- *“...people will feel safe with a head that’s strong and will take things forward...” (2M07a)*
- *“...heads need the support of all their team, from the LEA and everyone else involved in the PRU but they’ve got to have something about themselves...” (2t06a)*

It was clear that teaching staff wanted a ‘strong head’ but what were the properties of that behaviour? In addition to data collected from questionnaires I asked this question during interviews, there were three types of responses.

**(Type 1)** A clear visioned person with determination, nerve, with the ability to challenge everything and make decisions

- *“...a good head has got to have a ‘get a grip mentality’...” (2t06b)*
- *“...they should have a strong personality and clear boundaries...” (2t06a)*
- *“...ability to make decisions, and take responsibility for those decisions...” (2M07a)*
- *“...have the ability to challenge and confront behaviour and attitude from staff, as well as students...” (2qp06a)*
- *“...be able to problem solve...” (2qp06c)*
- *“...lead from the front with determination...” (2M07a)*
- *“...strength, purpose and nerve, they’ll need nerve because they’ll face challenges from every direction...” (2M07d)*

**(Type 2)** Someone who is sensitive to others, with good listening and negotiating skills

- *“...Someone who can listen to the concerns of staff...” (2M07g)*

- *“...they have to have good listening skills... they have to be flexible and willing to negotiate...” (2t06c)*
- *“...someone who takes time to get all the information and opinions of all staff before making a decision or making changes...” (2t06c)*
- *“...sensitive to the needs of the students and the staff...” (2qp06h)*

**(Type 3)** Someone who changes behaviours as events and individual staff need change

- *“...this is a hard question...what I need changes...” (2qp06h)*
- *“...when I first filled in the questionnaire we were having a number of problems with a group of students, they’ve moved off site now... what I said then is probably different to what I would say now...” (2t06c)*
- *“...a good Head is someone that has a bag of tricks up their sleeves...they have to be different for different people...” (2M07a)*
- *“...well when I first started I wanted the head to direct me, he didn’t and I struggled, I thought he was too airy fairy...I suppose I was anxious and didn’t have that confidence in myself....he’d asked me what I thought...now I know what I am doing and I feel much more confident...now I am happy with him I get space and can be creative...”(2t06c)*
- *“...it depends on what is happening...they need to have lots of things...” (2M07d)*
- *“...well its not like I first said...we were heading toward an inspection and I suppose we all needed a lot of direction...only some of the staff had been through an inspection before... I think I would describe the behaviours of a good head differently now because the stress is off...” (2t07e)*

These responses suggested that PRU teaching staff have perceptions of what qualities a good head teacher should have, they want different things at different times depending on what emotional state or stage of their career they are facing at the time.

Discussion about what teaching staff perceived as the role of the head teacher could have gone on for some time, mainly because I am a head teacher and was surprised at the strong response from teaching staff and the weight of responsibility being placed on the head teacher. However, on reflection I was able to recall incidents and situations in my own work place when I was surprised at expectations staff had of me.

### **5.7 Professional Key Stakeholders**

This group of respondents included staff from the Youth Offending Teams (YOT), Social Services, National Health Service (NHS), Community Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), as well as members of the PRU Management Committee. For most there was a dual role in that they were members of management committees as well as professionals holding caseloads of students and carers of students attending PRUs. The number of respondents to the questionnaires was smaller than the PRU head teacher sample group and PRU teaching staff group, however each of them agreed to speak to me further.

I did not include students or carers as key stakeholder, as for this research I was looking for the professional perception of the role of PRUs. The experiences and perceptions of students and carers of students attending PRUs is an area that Garner (2000) discussed in his ISEC presentation.

When asked what a good PRU was, two themes came from this group of respondents; management and multi-agency working. This group of respondents included members of the Management Committee of the PRU. The role of the Management Committee has a management role of the PRU, which is clear in the name of the committee. However, from the questionnaires and from verbal feedback gathered during 1-2-1 discussions, responses were all focused on the role of the head, not one respondent linked the role of management as the responsibility of the Management Committee:

- *“...a good PRU has an ethos that has clear goals for staff as well as students and a head that was forward thinking and focused...”* (3qp06a)

- *“...you need a head who is not intimidated by the behaviour of students and parents...without this type of head students and parents will cause chaos...” (3qp06c)*
- *“...this type of educational provision is complex; you must have an experienced educational practitioner fronting it who is able to work in a multi-agency way...” (3m07c)*
- *“... a good PRU is multi-agency working for a holistic approach to young people that minimises duplication of services...a good head has to understand this, it's only then that the staff will take it on board...” (3t07b)*

Key stakeholders recognised that the role of the PRU is complex and that the management must have good practitioner experience as well as a commitment to multi-agency working. The fact that not one respondent reflected on their role does support the suggestion that the role of the head is complex and a major factor in the success or failure of a PRU.

As respondents were from a multi agency background, it is not unreasonable to expect the issue of ‘multi-agency working’ to be an area that is felt to be essential for success. I asked respondents what multi-agency working was:

- *“...good communication between agencies...” (3t06h)*
- *“...keeping everyone informed of decisions or changes...avoid staff working in the dark...” (3M07b)*
- *“...social workers being invited to education meeting and vice a versa, or at least being sent minutes of meetings....” (3t07e)*
- *“...joint meetings ...less use of jargon...sharing information...” (3M07b)*
- *“... a PRU is not like any other educational setting, the issues kids have are more intense and staff tend to be more involved with kids’ problems...a head should have experience of not only education, it makes the approach and understanding more multi-agency...” (3m07b)*
- *“... I worked with a head of a PRU that had also worked with social services, it made a big difference, she was not only seeing things from an educational perspective but she was able to use her social work*

*experience in the dealing with students as well as working with agencies...”(3m06d)*

One respondent was considered in her response, providing a view into the frustrations of many professionals.

- *“...good question, only I am not sure how to answer this, I know what I mean but I am not sure if it is what others mean...I mean shared accommodation, joint resources, joint meetings, joint training, joint language, we spend too much time speaking our own language without learning the language of our partners... education is measured by examination or academic results, teachers have to be driven by this and often social needs of a child are pushed aside, other services are measured by other standards and they only consider what they need to do or are measured by... we talk about working with students holistically, I think that without a real training programme that starts at under-graduate level we will never really do this....” (3m07a)*

Multi-agency working has historically been seen to be an essential when working with children and young people. However, research suggests that this is not as easy an environment to create as may be first imagined (Atkinson et al 2002). The comments made by this one respondent demonstrate an awareness of what needs to be done to move forward successfully in developing good multi-agency practice and training at the appropriate stage of professional development.

### **5.8 PRU Non-teaching Staff**

This group of respondents were made up of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), admin staff and youth workers. The written responses gave little information or insight into ideas or concerns from this group. Responses were generally one word answers or short sentences. When meeting with respondents from this sample group, respondents had the opportunity to talk, which they told me they found easier. My staff were provided with questionnaires to complete. I do not know if they completed them as I kept responses confidential. My secretary opens all my mail and it was agreed

that she would set aside returned questionnaires and give them to me weekly, I did not know whether questionnaires were returned by post or handed to the secretary. I did not ask my staff team to meet with me to discuss their responses, I did not want to influence any information provided. It was however during these less structured meetings with other non teaching staff that staff appeared more confident, more prepared to contribute, some even admitted to not completing questionnaires:

- *“...I didn’t know what to write... I wasn’t sure what I should say...”*  
(4m06a)

I encouraged respondents to be honest, to tell the truth. I reassured them that what they had to say was as important as anyone else:

- *“...I don’t really know what makes a good or a bad PRU, I know what it feels like to work in a PRU where I feel stressed and sometimes frightened of some of the older kids...I don’t know of any other PRU so is this a good or bad one...”* (4M07a)
- *“...We’ve only got one PRU in our county...so I don’t have anything to compare it with...I enjoy working here so I think it’s a good PRU...I suppose what I am saying is a good atmosphere where people get on is a sign of a good PRU...”* (4m06b)
- *“I used to work in mainstream as an LSA, now I work at the PRU doing the same job, here you are seen by the students as equal to the teachers and that is much better than working at the school...you feel more part of the team..”* (4m06d)
- *“...A good PRU uses its staff appropriately, identifies the skills of the whole team and uses them to take the whole PRU forward...”* I asked the respondent how the PRU did this, *“...I mean the staff and the head teacher...”* (4M07b)

For this group of respondents team work was important. When asked who was responsible for establishing good team work their response was different from other groups.

- *“...all of us...”*(4M07a)

- *“...we all have to work together, the teachers, the students, the cook everyone...” (4M07a)*
- *“...everyone who works here, you’ve got to get on and help one another, life is much better when everyone is saying the same thing...”(4M07)*
- *“...it helps when everyone knows their job and people respect the job you do, I feel valued and I value what others do...”(4M07b)*

Only one respondent talked about the head teacher in isolation:

- *“...the head teacher is responsible for setting the scene, making sure policies are in place, making sure that people know what is expected ...a head that does this will ensure that it’s a good PRU...” (4m06e)*

There was one clear difference between this respondent and others, this person worked directly to the head teacher whereas other respondents worked to the class teacher or deputy/assistant head.

## **5.9 LEA Officers**

In gathering data I contacted LEA Officers who were not members of the Management Committee but who had a clear role within PRUs, they included Educational Psychologists (EP), school advisers, behaviour support and learning support professionals.

The percentage of responses from this group of respondents was small, only 22%. This was disappointing in that these professionals are often the initial link between mainstream schools and PRUs in that their role takes them into both environments. A large percentage of this group of professionals are, I believe, in a unique position in that they can follow the progress of individual students who move into the PRU setting, e.g. the EP and behaviour support teachers. With this in mind I believe that this group of professionals had a lot to contribute.

When asked what needed to be in place to create a successful PRU respondents unanimously identified, excellent leadership and management, suitable premises and appropriate funding. Respondents saw essential behaviours of a successful PRU as:

- *“...one with a dynamic, creative, positive and forward-looking manager...”(5qc06a)*
- *“...one that re-engages young people back into mainstream education...” (5qc06b)*
- *“...well trained staff...” (5qc06b)*
- *“...leadership and management that is supportive and visionary...” (5m07a)*
- *“...respectful appropriate relationships between everyone...adults and young people...” (5pc06e)*
- *“...a successful PRU needs strong leadership and management. It needs to be reflective and open to ideas...” (5qc06f)*

Only one respondent from this sample group agreed to speak to me. This person was new in post and had not worked previously with PRUs. She was honest in her response and said that she had agreed to meet with me in the hope she was going to learn more about PRUs.

With such little response it is impossible to offer analysis or feedback that is not interpretive of my own perceptions of respondent's feedback – it is likely that my own subjectivity would influence the outcomes of this group of respondents. Feedback I did get from the questionnaires raised the issue of leadership and management, it was reported that good leadership and management are necessary for a successful PRU. What was not clear was where that leadership and management should come.

However during a conversation with an LEA officer, who was a member of a management committee, (who had refused to complete a questionnaire or take part in this study) about how much work the head teacher of a PRU had done to make the PRU such a success for staff, students and more recently the Inspection Team. I was surprised by the response. The LEA officer was



adamant and very forceful in her belief that the PRU was only successful because of the work she had undertaken in supporting and guiding the PRU Head Teacher and staff:

- *“...It is the partnership between the Head and myself that makes the PRU successful...” (5m07b)*

The LEA Officer would not accept that the head teacher's contribution to the success of the PRU may have greater influence, than her influence, on the success of the PRU. She did not recognise that the PRU head teacher supported the staff and students on a daily basis and therefore invested more physical time in the PRU. Other respondents from this sample group touched on leadership and management in questionnaire responses, but respondents from this sample group were not clear who was responsible for leading and managing a PRU. This LEA Officer was clear that her influence on the PRU head teacher and PRU staff was the main factor in the success of the PRU.

The county in which this LEA Officer worked had a second PRU. The second PRU had a very different reputation. The second PRU was struggling, there were high levels of fixed-term exclusions, long term staff sickness, high number of incident reports recorded with Health and Safety and criticism from a recent inspection. However, the LEA Officer, who had the same role with both PRUs, was clear that this was the result of the PRU head teacher's poor performance. I asked the LEA Officer about the partnership between the LEA and the second PRU. Was the partnership between the LEA Officer and the PRU a factor in the failing of second PRU, in the same way that the partnership between the LEA Officer and the first PRU was identified as the main factor, by the LEA Officer, for the success of the other PRU. The LEA Officer completely shifted her position. For the successful PRU the LEA Officer's relationship was the main factor, however, in terms of the failing PRU she was clear this was a result of the PRU head teacher and nothing to do with the LEA. The discussion with the LEA Officer was quite difficult and it would have been easy to assume that this LEA Officer represented the views of all LEA Officers. However, after discussions with other LEA Officers it was clear that this is not the case (further discussed p 129).

A feature that was clear from this group of respondents however, is that 'leadership' and 'management' were used separately in the same sentence. This may suggest that this group of respondents see them as different. Other respondent groups described characteristics or behaviours that they saw as essential elements of a successful PRU which may be elements of either management or leadership.

### **5.10 Mainstream Teaching Staff**

This group included head teachers, senior teaching staff and classroom teachers. The percentage of questionnaires returned was low, 10% and no respondents from this group were able to meet with me. From the small number of returned questionnaires, only one was fully completed.

What was clear however from the responses was that there was little knowledge of the role of the PRU, responses suggested that a PRU was a place for 'sorting out the behaviour':

- "...a PRU should reform student behaviour..." (6qc06a)
- "...a special unit for kids with difficult behaviour..." (6qc06c)

Responses to all aspects of the questionnaire were focused on behaviour; there was no reference to teaching and learning, student achievement, curriculum or appropriate teaching strategies. This group of respondents perceived a good PRU as one that '*managed student behaviour*', one respondent talked about changing student behaviour. Respondents recorded that a good PRU is one where the '*head is strong and able to manage student behaviour*'. I was unable to speak to questionnaire respondents; therefore it was not possible to analyse in depth their perceptions of PRUs. I was unable to check if respondents understood that PRUs must provide an academic curriculum and standards in teaching and learning which are measured by inspection teams in the same ways as mainstream schools.

Unfortunately, questionnaires completed by this sample group offered little data on the overall perception of PRUs. There will be reasons why there was

a poor response but it was not possible from the information provided to ascertain what those reasons were.

### **5.11 Emergent Leadership**

From each of the sample groups themes did appear, some more clear than others, for example funding, training, inexperienced staff, staff training and accommodation. However, the strongest theme that came from all sample groups was behaviours or characteristics of a lead person within the PRU. Those behaviours or characteristics were perceived by all the sample groups as being the key to a successful or failing PRU. This was even the case for the sample group of PRU head teachers and LEA Officers. I wanted to be clear what respondents meant by the status of the lead person. I asked respondents, if the lead person was in the role as the 'assigned leader', in other words the head teacher in post, or could the role of lead person be taken up by another person - an 'emergent leader'.

These questions created a very lively response. Respondents reflected on their own experiences, more than one respondent described situations when there had been difficulties in teams, when head teachers had been undermined by other staff members who wanted something else. Or when there had been conflict when the head teacher wanted change and some team members did not want change, leading to teams being split. Respondents felt that this always lead to breakdowns in communication and teamwork, which they reported as sometimes leading to bullying of the head teacher. Respondents did feel that someone could emerge into the role and take the place of the head teacher but unless this person was recognised by the Management Committee as the 'official' PRU head teacher, their ability to stay in the role of 'emergent leader' would be short lived (See Appendix I).

### **5.12 Thoughts**

I have presented a large amount of feedback with little mention or link to chaos and complexity theory. However, I believe at this stage that recording and presenting this feedback was an important move forward in my study. What I have done is use feedback, which is an important notion of chaos and

complexity. The feedback that was gathered consisted of what sample groups identified as the most influential or important behaviour in a successful or failing PRU. From this initial review of data there are common themes emerging from different sample groups. These themes include appropriate training opportunities for PRU staff, limited premises, funding, ethos and philosophy of the PRU, understanding of the role of PRUs, teaching and learning.

However, the theme that is echoed by all sample groups, as the most important aspect of a successful PRU, is the characteristics and behaviours of the 'assigned PRU head teacher'. At this stage it was not clear what the characteristics and behaviours that emerged were. Were they linked to leadership skills and behaviours, management skills and behaviours, or something else?

What I have gained from this element of the research is a better understanding of the expectations of staff on the role of the PRU head teacher. This one piece of work alone has helped with my own development in terms of working better with staff. For example, I now take the opportunities when meeting with staff to enquire and consider what they expect of me, what they perceive I can do to make things better. I work hard to keep an open dialogue with staff when situations arise.

*This chapter provided a lot of data to consider. On completion of the chapter I was content with the quantity of information I had gathered. I believed that my data gathering was complete. I wanted to move forward to interpret my findings and share it with ours. However, it was as I moved into the next stage of my study that I was soon aware that I needed to take steps backward and revisit and check my data.*

## CHAPTER SIX: IDENTIFYING FACTORS OF A SUCCESSFUL PRU HEAD TEACHER

*As I moved toward this final stage of my study I had in my mind a clear plan of how it would look - I had a clear way forward. I had collected data and now I was just going to analyse it. However, my 'linear' plan forward was quickly 'pushed into touch' after a brief meeting with an LEA Officer.*

*I had moved forward into this stage without my 'chaos and complex tinted glasses', which was a mistake. I really did think I was on the 'home run'. However, Byrne (1998) when discussing chaos and complexity, describes how relatively simple interactions, on their own, would not be seen as having any great influence but can have a 'knock-on effect' that creates something unexpected. My own reaction to the comments made by this one officer did create in me something unexpected. Instead of my 'clear plan' to simply review the data I had gathered, I was stuck by how this one opinion had so much effect on me. It left me questioning my interpretations of the data. I needed to check that my data was a true reflection of the views of others. This decision changed the direction of my 'home run' idea.*

### **6.1 'Very similar conditions can result in very dissimilar outcomes'**

Gleick (1987)

During a feedback session (5m07) to a group of representatives from each of the sample groups there was an unexpected response from one LEA Officer (p130). During the session I highlighted themes coming out of the research, what respondents believed influenced successful PRUs and what respondents perceived to be factors in a failing PRU. I explained that the perception from sample groups was that the most influential behaviour or property in determining a successful or failing PRU was the 'head teacher'. I

explained that from the data gathered each of the sample groups were clear that they perceived the behaviour or skills or characteristics of the 'head teacher' determined student progress, staff commitment, and ethos, in fact the perceived behaviour, skills or characteristics of the 'head teacher' determined the overall quality of the PRU provision.

The group appeared interested, asking appropriate questions and asking for more feedback of findings from the research project. After the session an LEA Officer asked to speak to me alone about the findings. Her behaviour and attitude during this 1-2-1 session challenged the findings and created a 'knock on effect' that I did not expect. The LEA Officer said that she could not accept the findings from the feedback, particularly the feedback I had offered from a sample group that included LEA Officers and officers who are members of a Management Committee. The LEA Officer was very strong in the belief that LEA Officers had a major role and influence in the successful performance of PRUs and that the findings were not reflective of the LEA position. I explained that this finding was what it was. I explained that I accepted her perception that she saw the role of the LEA Officer as a major part in the success of the PRU, but that this perception was not mirrored by other respondents from the sample groups. In moving the discussion on, I asked how she perceived the role she played and whether she saw it as a partnership with the PRU head teacher and other staff. Was it a lead role, did they see the role of the LEA Officer bigger or smaller than the role of the PRU head teacher, equal or some thing else? It was at this point that the Officer described a PRU within they county she worked in. The Officer saw her role as the leader, she did not respond to my earlier questions about partnership working with the PRU head teacher. The LEA Officer's perception was that her role was paramount in the development of the PRU and that she had played a major role in the recent successful Inspection. The LEA Officer wanted to make clear that the PRU head teacher was not the main influence but that the role of the LEA Officer was that main influence.

The LEA also had another PRU that had recently been inspected; this PRU did not receive a positive report. I asked the LEA Officer if the commitment to

both PRUs had been the same, I suggested that the same levels of support and guidance to both PRUs would mean that the PRUs would receive similar reports from the Inspection Teams. If this was not the case then there must be another ingredient or factor that affected the overall result of the Inspection and the success or failure of the PRU. The LEA Officer did not accept this and the final comment was that maybe my analysis was such because of my own role as a PRU head teacher.

Of course one explanation to this response is that this particular LEA Officer simply had a different perspective, or that she felt unrewarded in her efforts within the county and the findings I had highlighted made worse her perception of her role. The LA Officer did not want to discuss these findings within the group, which suggests a more personal emotion attached to her reaction. I could have ignored the response, which would have been a very linear approach to take. The response did not match the rest of the sample group so could have easily been set aside. However, I am using a chaos and complexity approach to my study which is non-linear. Within a chaos and complexity approach the views, perceptions and opinions of all the population must have value.

This one response also raised an ethical dilemma described by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992), as a 'costs benefits ratio'. In simple terms a researcher must strike a balance in his/her role as a researcher, looking for the truth and the rights and values of the participants. Aronson et al (1990) suggest this is a difficult ethical dilemma. That one response may not appear to have any great importance in that the response did not match in any way the responses from over 150 respondents and to some extent the comments could have been lost amongst the many others. However, this one incident did create an unexpected response in me. I found myself questioning my findings; had my role as a PRU head teacher really influenced my analyses of the feedback? The conditions were the same for all respondents, i.e. they were asked the same questions. However, the response from this one LA Officer differed drastically from any other respondent; this respondent used an aggressive, challenging tone and approaches which was unexpected and

therefore a 'dissimilar outcome'. Of course the LA Officer could have simply responded differently because they perceived things different; the question was 'from your perceptions...?' However, when the LA Officer refused to accept she had the same role in the failing PRU within the county, I did not discount this as an explanation for her differing response.

I decided to present interim findings to sample groups, asking respondents further questions that enabled me to carry out a robust analyse of all data gathered.

## **6.2 Data Analysis**

The response from the LEA Officer was unpredicted and the 'knock on effect' is that I made the decision to carry out a further piece of data collection. The LEA Officer was challenging the findings, I wanted to test if others also challenged the findings in that same way as the LEA Officer was doing. In testing this LEA Officer's assertion that my role as a head teacher had coloured my interpretation, I decided to present interim findings to each of the sample groups and simply asked for 'feedback':

- What do you think of the findings, do you agree, are there any surprises?
- Is there anything you would like to add to identified themes?

In completing this final stage I collected data from, workshops, group discussions, national conference, 1-2-1 sessions, semi structured interviews and discussions with two staff teams as part of their weekly staff meetings (1M06, 2M07). I agreed with all respondents that their comments would be kept confidential. I explained that I would use a code (appendix I) to anonymise all data collected.

In this final stage of data collection the majority of data was collected during the 8<sup>th</sup> National Conference for PRUs (July 2007). Representatives from the sample group representing 'mainstream teachers' were not present at this conference. Therefore I collected data from this group during a weekly staff meeting that I had been given permission to attend. On that occasion there



were more respondents taking part in this aspect of the research than in the primary data collection period. Initial data collected from this sample group resulted in only 3 questionnaires being completed and only one questionnaire completed fully. I asked respondents why they thought the response to questionnaires poor, respondents thought that mainstream teachers knew little about PRUs so there was no emotional or professional link to the questionnaire and subject, "... people may have thought they had nothing to offer..." (6M06)

My first step was to present interim findings to delegates of the PRU National Conference (2007). I had used earlier annual conferences of this organisation to collect data for previous stages of this research. It was agreed that I would lead three workshops over two days of the Conference. I was surprised to see that the number of delegates signed up to my work shops who had attended had taken part in the previous year's work shop, the first round of data collection, and were very keen to be part of this stage. Each of the workshops was energetic, respondents were interested in the feedback, discussion developed between delegates, respondents wanted copies of the power point (appendix IV) and asked whether they could access final findings of the research, delegates described how they felt active members of this research project.

There were two activities for all respondents I worked with in this final data collection exercise. During each workshop I presented the interim findings and asked delegates:

**Activity One:**

*'What do you think of the findings, do you agree, are there any surprises?'*

*'What, if anything would you like to add to the themes already identified?'*

**Activity Two:**

I asked delegates to look at the behaviours and characteristics highlighted and presented in the findings through the power point and to work in small groups to agree on a ranking of the behaviour and characteristics. The ranking was to present what they perceived as the most essential elements of

the 'lead person', the most important ranked as one the second most important as two, and so on.

It was after this data was collected that I carried out an in-depth analysis. I created six categories, (demanding/challenging, pastoral, thoughtful/thinker, innovative, strategic, committed) and definitions of the categories from the data collected. (See to p163 / 8.1)

In developing defined categories from the research data I intended to mirror my new categories against management and leadership theories established in the academic and business world. As I approached this stage I began to wonder how this new data would 'fit in', my wondering left me with three possible outcomes:

1. findings would simply suggest that a successful PRU head teacher demonstrated leadership behaviours and characteristics identified in current leadership theory;
2. findings would simply suggest that a successful PRU head teacher demonstrated leadership behaviours and characteristic identified in current management theory;
3. findings would suggest that a PRU head teacher has to work in a very specific way that challenges current management theories and leadership theories.

I compared the behaviours and characteristics of the six categories I identified against theorists that have been identified as key researchers of human and organizational behaviours and have enabled further development in what we know today to be 'leadership and management'. It is not the intention to squeeze identified categories from this research into the shape of one or more of the theories I will be using, but to look at what respondents agree as essential behaviours and characteristics of a successful PRU head teacher and check if they are already identified in the world of management and leadership.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTING ON LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

“...leadership is probably the most studied and least understood management subject...”

Bennis and Nanus (1985)

*I have often struggled in understanding and differentiating between management and leadership tasks within my own role. This I understand is not unusual (Hunt 1991). I imagine I am leading when I develop and define the ethos of the PRU but perform as a manager when I am dealing with the running of the school and the constant assessment of monitoring of staff performance, student progress, reporting to the LEA and other agencies as well as monitoring that we are meeting national and local standards. As a head teacher of a PRU who supports students with very challenging and dangerous behaviour I am reminded constantly that I am responsible for 'managing' the behaviour of the students attending the PRU. That same voice also reminds me that I must 'lead the way forward'. When reporting back on incidents that occur, I often reflect on 'what I did when I moved that situation on or what I did to secure that situation'. It is not always clear to me if what I did or what I am doing would be described in terms of management strategies or leadership strategies.*

*Misunderstanding differences in language or terminology is not unusual. For example, in education we use the term 'teaching and learning', I am still surprised by how many people do not know the difference. During a recent family meeting a parent told me they thought 'teaching and learning' was just education jargon. She went on to describe how in meetings with social workers they used words she did not understand, she was told that they were speaking jargon, a language that only social workers and other professionals understood. I explained that in a way*

*'teaching and learning' is a 'sort of jargon', in that it is language that is linked to education, it is a way of describing what should happen in a successful classroom; teachers teach and students learn.*

*For many it is difficult to establish differences between leadership and management ([www.leadershiphelp.com](http://www.leadershiphelp.com) Aug 07). Reading the Times Educational Supplement (TES 2007) discussions and taking part in the 'community staffroom' on differences between leadership and management, one writer described how he had recently taken up his first headship and was studying for an MA in Education Management. The writer said he was struggling with the notion of management versus leadership and wanted advice; I was unable to offer any.*

## **7.1 Introduction**

Leadership versus management is a question that has been asked for some time (Hunt 1991, Kennedy 1991). During the late nineteenth century theories of management and organisations were developed. For many years one of the most common ways of distinguishing the psychological disposition of leaders and managers, has been to see them as work-oriented or person-oriented (Gronn 2003). That is, the priorities of individuals in meeting tasks or responsibilities in the workplace, determine their approach in terms of being leaders or managers. For example, if you are more interested in getting the job done you would be seen as work-orientated whereas if you put employees first you are seen to be person-orientated. Immediately I am uncomfortable with part of this perception; being seen as a 'work-orientated person-in-charge' to me sounds as though that person is someone who stands alone, impersonal, cold to the needs of others and definitely not a team worker. Being seen as 'person-orientated person-in-charge' feels friendlier, someone who cares is softer and much more likeable.

*I am not sure if my concerns are because my inner voice is the voice of an ardent 'person-orientated person-in-charge' who wants to fight the corner of this style, or whether it is the worries of the 'work-orientated person-in-charge' who is fearful that she has been found out and feels misunderstood in her style. I hope at this stage it is a bit of both. I am though still concerned about the reaction in myself whilst looking at the cold language of what is sometimes perceived as the differences between leadership and management.*

Below I have created a table, adapted from a variety of sources Zaleznick (1977), Bennis and Nanus (1985), Kotter (1990) and Hickman (1992), that provides easy reference to what is understood and described as behaviours and characteristics differences between managers and leaders.

**Table 6: Summary of Characteristics / Behaviours of Managers and Leaders**

<b>Managers</b>	<b>Leaders</b>
Take charge	Encourage delegation
Plan	Experiment
Reactive	Proactive
Perform duties	Pursue dreams
Control	Empower
Plans detail	Sets direction
Does what is right	Does the right thing
Subordinates	Followers
Money for work	Excitement for work
Results	Achievement
Punishment	Rewards
The manager administers	The leaders innovates
Maintains	Develops
Accepts reality	Investigates reality
Focuses on systems and structures	Focuses on people
Relies on control	Inspires trust
Has a short-range view	Has a long-range view
Asks how and when	Asks what and why
Has their eye on the bottom line	Has their eye on the horizon
The classic good soldier	Their own person
Relates to people according to the other person's role	Relates to people in intuitive way

*(Adapted from a variety of sources Zaleznick 1977, Burns 1978, Bass 1985, Bennis and Nanus 1985, Kotter 1990 and Hickman 1992)*

I do like the simpler version of a definition between the two made by Malik (2007), who described the difference in terms of explorers. The manager is described as the person who is worried that as they hack through a thick forest they are cutting a straight and efficient path. Whereas the leader in the group would just climb the trees and check they are going in the right direction.

Kotter (1988) is clear that the differences between leadership and management should not be taken seriously and that both are very important processes. What is refreshing for me is that Kotter (1988) is clear that the common belief that leadership is in some way 'good' and that management is 'bad' is wrong. I still feel that leaders are seen as the 'good guys', for example Hickman (1992) says that managers tend to see complexity whereas leaders simplify what they see. Managers, he says, use every detail available to paint the most realistic picture of the world, with all its complexities. Leaders on the other hand see through those complexities to look for patterns and connections. Hickman (1992) defends the 'leader' by suggesting that 'leaders' see just as much as the 'manager' but 'leaders' use what they see to simplify the reality. In the world of business this may be a useful skill – being able to see 'the wood for the trees'. However, with the role of the PRU head teacher the 'woods' change. It is essential that every small and simple aspect of the behaviour or situation is captured and used to create safety and order. Simplifying staff and student behaviour or incidents is what respondents feel is behaviour of a failing PRU head teacher.

Many would say that you need a 'bit of both' but what is not clear is what is meant by a 'bit of both' Hunt (1991), Bennis (1989) and Schein (1994). If you look at the many theories of management and leadership 'a bit of both' would result in many, many different types of approaches, which I don't believe is helpful for any professional looking to develop and learn skills or behaviours that will enable them to become successful PRU head teachers. What is also clear, from this research project, is that respondents from all sample groups are not vague but are very clear about what they perceive as essential in a successful PRU head teacher.



*It is important at this stage to be clear that this research is not intended to be a comparative of leadership and management but the perceptions of a particular group of key stakeholders about what makes a successful PRU. I did not expect key stakeholders to identify characteristics and behaviours of leadership and management to be a main factor in this research. What is unique is that, leadership and management are a bi-product of the research. I have chosen to use Maslow and McGregor as these theories, I believe, they suit what key stakeholders was saying.*

I reviewed a number of theories but then decided to use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and McGregor's X and Y theories as tools to look more closely at the findings of this research. Both Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and McGregor's X and Y Theories can be presented visually in simple form. Also as models they are tools I use daily to support students and staff

Maslow and McGregor theories could, by some, be seen as 'old fashioned', but I believe that they have a firm footing in history and in present day thinking and remain relevant. This is supported by Heil, Bennis and Stephens (2000), who assert that McGregor's ideas are more important and relevant than ever before. When reviewing Heil et al's (2000) work the Times (2000) suggests that Heil et al (2000) make the work of McGregor accessible to a new generation. The work of Maslow and McGregor is relevant today particularly because of their strong link to humanistic psychological where today it is a mission to make all types of organisation more humane, a place where people can achieve person and organisational goals (Bradford and Burke 2005).

**Table7: Example of Theories Reviewed**

THEORY	SUMMARY OF THEORY
Great Man Theory	Great Man theory assume that 'great' leaders are born and not made. Theories often portray leaders as heroic and destined to rise to leadership when needed. The term 'great man' was used because at this time leadership was perceived to be a male quality. Examples of this theory are given as Churchill, Roosevelt and Hitler.

	<p>I would suggest there may be a fragile link between Great Man Theories and Stein et al (1979) model of Emergent Leadership. Emergent leadership can occur when there is a need for leadership, which is clearly an important aspect of Great Man Theory – leaders are destined to rise when needed.</p>
Trait Theory	<p>Very much like Great Man Theories it was thought that leaders were born with inherent physiological and personality traits. Stogdill (1974) identified several traits and skills as critical to leaders.</p> <p>For some time inherited traits were sidelined as learned and more realistic as reasons for people acquiring leadership positions.</p> <p>Findings from this research does suggest that a Successful Head Teacher' should have particular characteristics. However, there was no discussion about whether these characterises or traits were learned or inherited.</p>
Contingency Theories	<p>Contingency theory has an approach of 'it depends'. More simply this theory concluded that the best style or approach depends on the situation. Contingency theory claims that there is no best way to make decisions. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent (dependent) upon the internal and external situation. Several contingency approaches were developed concurrently in the late 1960s.</p> <p>Contingency Theory suggested that previous theories such as Taylor's Scientific Management Theory failed because it did not recognise that management style and organisational structure were influenced by various aspects of the environment: the contingency factors. There could not be "one best way" for leadership or organization.</p> <p>Historically, contingency theory suggested broad generalisations about the formal structures that are typically associated with or best fit the use of different technologies.</p>
Transactional and Transformational Theory	<p>Transactional leadership lies in the notion that the leader, who holds power and control over his or her employees or followers, provides incentives for followers to do what the leader wants. Hence, the notion, that if an employee does what is desired, a reward will follow, and if an employee does not, a punishment or withholding of the reward will occur.</p> <p>The relationship between leader and employee becomes "transactional" -- <i>I will give you this if you give me that, where the leader controls the rewards, or contingencies</i>. Transactional leadership makes clear what is required and expected from their subordinates. Sometimes punishments are not mentioned but they are understood.</p> <p>Burns (1978) described five different types of transactional leaders and four types of transformational leaders:</p> <p><u>Transactional</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opinion leaders</li> <li>• Bureaucratic leaders</li> <li>• Party leaders</li> <li>• Legislative leaders</li> <li>• Executive lead</li> </ul> <p><u>Transformational</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intellectual leaders</li> <li>• Reform leaders</li> <li>• Revolutionary leaders</li> <li>• Charismatic leaders</li> </ul> <p>The main limitation of this leadership is that it assumes that people are largely motivated by simple rewards. Under transactional leadership, employees are unable to do much to improve job satisfaction. This style</p>



	<p>of leadership is least interested in changing.</p> <p>The antithesis or opposite of transactional leadership theories is called transformational leadership theories. Transformational Leadership Theory assumes that people will follow a person who inspires them. A transformational leader is enthusiastic, motivational, energetic and not afraid to approach things from a different perspective, they are creative and democratic in their approach to decision making.,</p>
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*(Adapted from a number of sources including, Stewart 2006, Zaleznik 1977, Bennis & Nanus 1985, Stein et al 1979, Burns 1978, Bateman 2009, Marks 2009)*

In the literature of leadership, there are two basic models that leaders use. The first is to treat workers as automata, whose inner life is irrelevant and who simply react to the stimuli provided by leaders, this approach is more commonly linked to the term management. The other approach, often described as leadership, is to treat workers as being led autonomous individuals whose desires and ambitions provide an important motivation of their action, which can be moulded.

McGregor and Maslow in their own ways manage to bring these two approaches together. McGregor suggests that different leaders use different models, Theory X or Theory Y, he did not provide a model that allowed both to be used by the same leader at the same time. Maslow suggested one hierarchical system, first one then the other, but not both at the same time. Subsequent authors have offered minor modifications to the models, but have not really managed to bring them together.

Burns (1978) first introduced the concepts of Transformational Leadership, according to Burns Transformational Leadership is a process in which "leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation". Burns related to the difficulty in differentiation between management and leadership and claimed that the differences are in characteristics and behaviors. He established two concepts: transformational leadership and transactional leadership. There is a clear link between McGregor's earlier X and Y theories and Burns work, Transformational Leadership sitting closely with Y Theory and Transactional Leadership following the principles of McGregor's X Theory.

According to Burns, the transformational style creates significant change in the life of people and organisations. It redesigns perceptions and values, changes expectations and aspirations of employees. Unlike in the transactional style, it is not based on a "give and take" relationship.

Further modification comes with Bass (1985) who suggested a transformational leadership theory that added to the initial concepts of Burn's (1978). Bass (1985) suggested that the extent, to which a leader is transformational, is measurable in terms of his influence on the followers. Followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect to the leader and they will do more than they expected in the beginning. The leader transforms and motivates followers by charisma, intellectual arousal and individual consideration. In addition, this leader seeks for new working ways, while he/she tries to identify new opportunities versus threats and tries to get out of the status quo and alter the environment.

Later Bass & Avolio (1993) carried out a study that mapped the frequent leadership styles of managers and commanders. They located the two categories (transformational and transactional leadership) on a continuum and created more stages at the passage between those two leadership styles. This model is called "The Full Range of Leadership"

Work carried out by researchers and authors such as Burns, Bass, Avolio, Hunt, Bennis, Kotter and Hickman has been important in the development of our understanding of leadership. However, I believe that the earlier models of Maslow and McGregor, in this instance are adequate and reliable tools for use by this author.

It is not only theories of Maslow and McGregor that are still relevant today. For example Fiedler's (1967) Contingency Theory and research by Glatter and Harvey (2009) are linked. According to Fiedler (1967), there is no ideal leader, his Contingency Theory has a best fit approach. This Theory suggests that there is no best way to make decisions. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent (dependent) upon the internal and external

situation. Glatter and Harvey (2009) say the same. A key finding from Glatter and Harvey's research, looking at leadership theories and headship, suggested that there is no single model to suit all circumstances. Their research was undertaken in the hope that a debate could begin about what new leadership models, in education, should look like. The model developed by this researcher may be a model that could be incorporated into this debate.

## **7.2 Maslow and McGregor Theories**

Having analysed feedback from all sample groups and created six categories I need to establish if those behaviours or skills are leadership or management behaviours or skills. In developing the findings I looked at two theories that are very firmly set in the work of leadership and management theories, those of Maslow (1943) and McGregor (1960). As well as the two theories being firmly established I have also chosen these two theories because of the interconnectedness between the two in that McGregor's work followed Maslow, and McGregor based some of his ideas on Maslow work.

However, Maslow did leave the academic world for a short time and spent time in industry studying McGregor's theories in practice. Later Maslow concluded that McGregor's Theory Y did not work in reality. Maslow believed McGregor had ignored the need of structure that was provided by Theory X (Kennedy1991).

Over many years I have reflected on both Maslow and McGregor as tools in my own practice. I currently use Maslow's '*hierarchy of needs*' as a visual tool when working with young people with SEBD. Maslow's '*hierarchy of needs*' give a clear explanation to students and staff when I talk about why I make decisions or create the rules that I do. I also use McGregor's theories as a reflective tool when reviewing my own behaviour when working with staff and when I work with staff who have responsibility for managing Learning Support Assistants (LSA).

Kennedy (1991) suggests that Peter Drucker is one of the leading gurus in the world today but Drucker describes Abraham Maslow as the 'father of

humanist psychology' after Maslow (1943) published 'A Theory of Human Motivation' in Psychological Review, in his article Maslow presented a needs based framework of human motivation. It was as a result of this paper that the term, '*Hierarchy of Needs*' was created (Kennedy 1991). However it was not until Maslow's book, Motivation and Personality (1954) that the term was formally introduced.

Maslow had developed a theory that has influenced a number of different fields, education being one of them. Maslow is quoted so widely that many see Maslow's work of 'self-actualisation' as fundamental in the development and understanding of leadership and management (Wahba & Bridgewell, 1976, Soper, Milford & Rosenthal, 1995, Farthing 1999). Maslow's work on 'self-actualisation' was not however, unique, Carl Rogers, like Maslow, focused on the ways in which people 'self-actualise' (SparkNotes 2006). Maslow however, emphasized the particular needs that people have before they experience self-actualization. He organised these needs into a hierarchy, with the more basic, fundamental needs at the bottom and the more complex, self-actualizing needs at the top. The five identified needs are:

- Physiological needs: food, water, sleep, etc.
- Safety needs: shelter, protection from attack, etc.
- Belongingness and love needs: establishing social ties
- Esteem needs: self-respect and respect from others
- Self-actualization needs: self-expression, creativity, self-discovery, connectedness, and purpose.

Maslow (1943) explained that each of the lower stages needed to be satisfied (not always fully) before the individual could work to achieve the needs of the next higher level. A person who has not satisfied basic physiological needs will not be able, for example, to work on establishing self-respect. Maslow qualified this stage-like progression by saying that satisfaction of each need was only relative (a person could be somewhat hungry or sleep-deprived but

still working towards self-actualization) and that multiple needs could contribute to a single action.

**Table 8: Maslow Basic Needs**

Physiological needs	More simply our basic needs, what we need to maintain our human bodies, for example, food, water, sleep and oxygen. It is difficult to achieve anything without satisfying these <i>needs</i> . Without food, sleep or water we may be able to carry on for a limited time but our bodies will deteriorate and we will not function for long.
Safety needs	These needs are about making sure we have shelter, a roof over our heads. More broadly we would include protective clothing, or the rules and laws that are in place to keep us safe.
Belonging Needs	At this level our tribal nature is introduced, people are social beings and generally we strive for meaningful relationships with those around us. This works at a number of levels e.g. friends, colleagues, family and lovers
Esteem Needs	Once we begin to satisfy our need to belong we then move on to want to be more than just a member of a group, we need a higher position within a group, looking for respect from others.
Self-actualisation	The need to maximise your own potential, whatever that may be. For example for students I support it may be that they achieve their GCSEs and move into the world of work with their chosen field, it may be that they manage to return to school. The way self-actualisation is expressed changes over our life cycle. What we aim for as child and young people will differ to what we want to achieve as adults.

*(Adapted from a number of sources e.g. Schein 1994, Morrison 1998)*

Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs is an excellent visual resource when working with students who either struggle or refuse to engage with more 'wordy' tools, it can also be used to work with younger children and older students when setting rules and boundaries. Using Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, I am able to demonstrate to students in my care why I may make a particular decision or put in place a particular boundary or rule. For example, to enable a sense of 'belonging', staff and students must have lunch together, have breaks together, staff must have school dinners, the same food as the students. Staff and all students must all eat from the set menu, there are only two choices. The simple strategy such as eating and relaxing together creates an environment of '*us*' and not '*them and us*' which is essential when working with children and young people with SEBD. The need to break down the barriers that create isolation and conflict are an important factor to success in the PRU.

Much of McGregor's work is based on Maslow (Farthing 1999). McGregor coined the terms Theory X and Theory Y, these two terms are diametrically opposed management assumptions. Theory X assumes that all human beings are lazy, they do not like work and have to be directed. Whereas, Theory Y assumes that human beings want to work, they want to achieve and want to take on responsibility (Stogdill 1974). McGregor (1960) proposed his famous X-Y theory which remains commonly referred to in management and leadership areas today. McGregor (1960) acknowledged that his research into the X-Y theories was not completely original but included some ideas from other researchers of management and leadership (Kennedy 1991). McGregor's (1960) ideas about human nature were closely linked to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Like Maslow, McGregor identified a number of human wants and needs. McGregor grouped Maslow's hierarchy into 'lower level needs' needs and 'higher level needs' needs.

McGregor (1960) with his Theory X and Theory Y states that there are two fundamental approaches to management and Theory X and Theory Y:

- Theory X assumes that people are lazy and need direction (*management*)
- Theory Y assumes that people have a psychological need to work and want achievement and responsibility (*leadership*)

*Theory X (management):* McGregor (1960) believes that the origins of his Theory X are in the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Having being banished from the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve would for the rest of their lives have to work to survive (Kennedy 1991). McGregor's (1960) 'lower-level needs' mirror that of Maslow's 'need to belong', 'safety needs' and 'physiological needs'. This supports his view that employees motivation is only in security and monetary rewards

*Theory Y (leadership):* Theory Y represents a more optimistic view of human behaviour. In a strong contrast to Theory X, McGregor (1960) says that in the right conditions employees will seek responsibility and be creative in quality and reaching goals. According to McGregor his 'higher level needs' equate to

Maslow's 'self-esteem' and 'self-actualisation'. According to McGregor these 'higher level needs' are never completely satisfied and therefore it is through these needs that individuals can be motivated (theory Y).

**Table 9:        *McGregor (1960) Theory X, Theory Y***

<b>Theory X</b>	<b>Theory Y</b>
People are inherently lazy and must, therefore, be motivated by outside incentives	Work is necessary for a persons' psychological well-being and development
People must be induced or forced to make the effort	People want to be interested in their work
People would rather be directed than accept responsibility	People will direct themselves towards a target to which they feel committed
People will seek to avoid accepting responsibility	People will seek and accept responsibility under the right conditions
Most people are not very creative except in avoiding work	Self-discipline is more effective than imposed discipline; it can also be more severe and self-demanding than imposed discipline
Does not participate or work well in team	Creativity, imagination and ingenuity are widely, not narrowly, distributed in the population and are largely underused
Results driven and deadline driven, to the exclusion of everything else	The expenditure of mental effort is a natural as play
Average humans are clear and unambiguous and want to feel secure	People are imaginative and creative. Their ingenuity should be used to solve problems at work

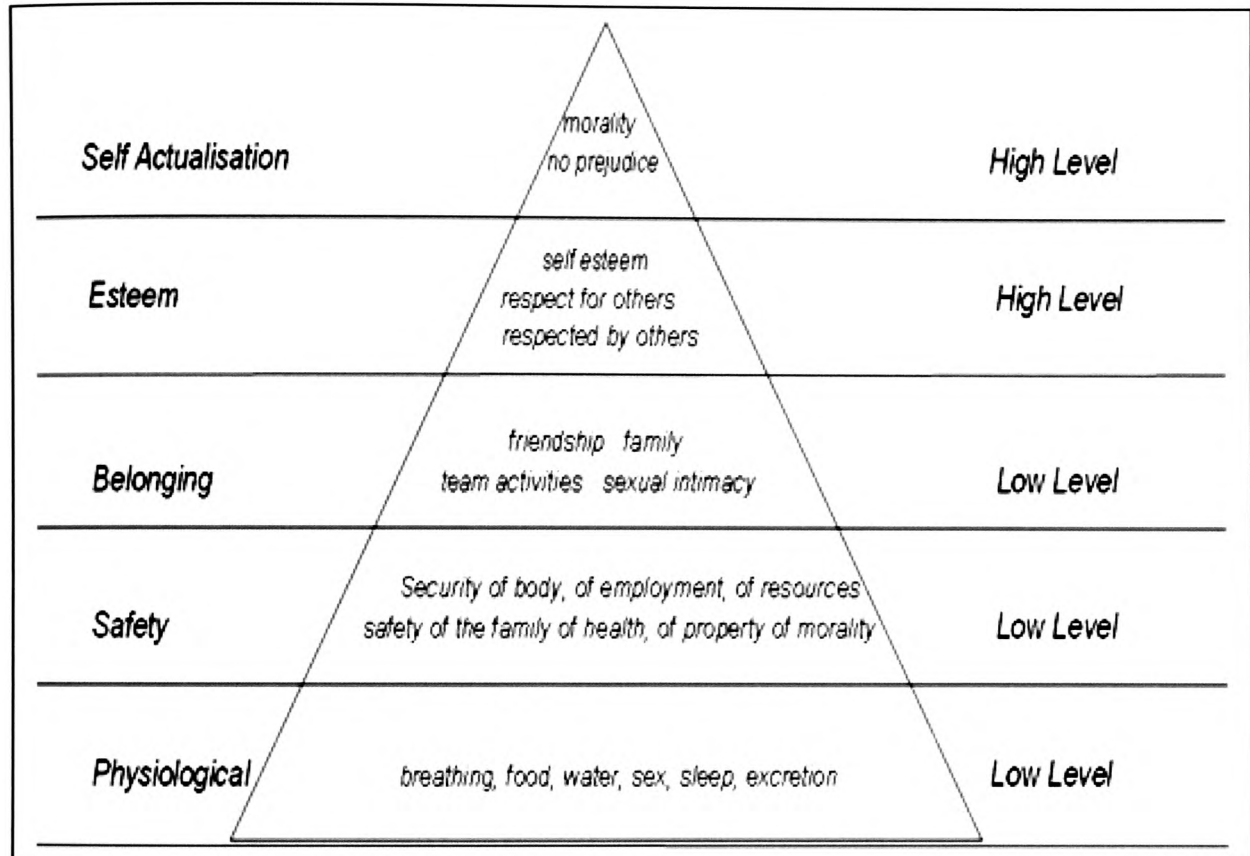
*(Adapted from a number of sources including, Kennedy 1991, Schein 1994, Morrison 1998)*

I have chosen to use McGregor's Theories as a tool because of the extremities between the assumptions of Theory X and Theory Y, for example Theory X describes people avoiding responsibility whereas Theory Y says that people seek and accept responsibility. As a reflective tool the language is unambiguous and creates a clear message; McGregor's theories are easily understood by staff and students. For example, one of the aims of a successful PRU is to support children and young people to learn to take responsibility for their own actions, to learn to make safe choices which are linked to the assumptions of Theory Y. However, if your approach to teaching and managing children and young people with SEBD is one that suggests that pupils cannot change or that sanctions must always be used to motivate instead of reward, then behaviour is linked to Theory X.

Below is the pyramid which Maslow created in order to demonstrate his theory. I have added to the pyramid McGregor's' link to Maslow's principles of high and low level needs which demonstrate connectiveness between the theories I have chosen to use.

**Diagram 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

**McGregor (1960)**



I have found this model very valuable when working with both students and staff. The model displayed in the entrance of our building has been created by staff and students. I use the model as a reflective tool for staff. Working with students to create the model provided opportunities for better understanding and ownership.



## CHAPTER EIGHT: DEFINING A SUCCESSFUL PRU HEAD TEACHER

In this chapter I move from my own reflections to the reporting on perceptions of key stakeholders. Analyses of data collected from all sample groups, I believe, has provided a new framework for looking at behaviours that respondents perceive as essential to a successful PRU.

### *What do you think of the findings, do you agree, are there any surprises?*

Generally respondents were surprised; they were surprised that other sample groups agreed with their sample group. Respondents were quick to make clear that this surprise was not something negative but that they were pleased that such responses from such a large number of respondents gave weight to the findings. This response was common amongst all sample groups. They agreed that the most influential factor of a successful PRU were the skills, knowledge and behaviour of the head teacher. They felt that if this was identified to be the most influential aspect then it should also be the most damaging factor of a failing PRU. Respondents were clear that, when there is a failing PRU, poor accommodation, funding, partnerships with the LEA and mainstream schools will have an additional negative affect on the PRU. Whereas a successful PRU with a 'strong' Head Teacher facing the same difficulties in accommodation, funding, lack of LEA and mainstream support will be more likely to have opportunities for staff and students to achieve.

### *Is there anything you would like to add to the themes already identified in the earlier data collected?*

- Ethos
- Staff commitment
- Staff relationships
- Inexperienced staff
- Funding
- Accommodation
- Support from LEA
- Relationship with mainstream schools
- Qualities of head teacher

- Staff expectations
- Resources

Sample groups agreed with the list but felt that some themes should be combined. For example respondents' wanted staff relationships and staff expectations to become 'management' issues for the head teacher, ethos they felt were a 'leadership' issue for the head teacher and within the theme that described qualities of the head teacher. It was agreed that links between the LEA and the head teacher were very important, but not the most important. Respondents described how their own head teacher struggled daily with LEA perceptions and relationships with the PRU but the PRU was successful because the head teacher 'managed' those difficulties as they 'managed' other problems they faced. The final list of themes that all respondents agreed with is:

- Qualities of head teacher
- Accommodation
- Funding
- Inexperienced staff
- Relationships with LEA and mainstream schools

The final task I set the delegates was to 'rank' the behaviour and characteristics identified during the first round of data collection. I asked delegates to rank, according to importance, the behaviours, skills and characteristics of a successful PRU head teacher identified from previous data collected. I asked workshop delegates to number the most important as one, second most important two and so on.

The task took some time and caused much deliberation. The time taken to complete the task was greater than I had first allowed, workshops lasted 1hr 15 min, there were 3 planned workshops for each day; I planned to present in each slot. I hoped to work with different sample groups over two days however, the 'battle' for positioning in terms of what should be included in 'the top five' meant that all sample groups (excluding the mainstream teachers at

this stage) worked together for the afternoon of the second day; this session lasted over 2 hours.

Finally what was agreed by the respondents was that there would not be a 'top five' but that skills and behaviours identified by the sample groups should be included in the data analyses. Respondents from all sample groups were clear that all skills and behaviours were interchangeable and the list of identified behaviours and skills would change depending on their personal and professional state as well as the challenge they were facing. I listed each of the behaviours and skills identified by respondents. Some of these behaviours and skills were duplicated by respondents, below is the final list.

**Table 10: *Perceptions of key stakeholders: what a good PRU head teacher should be.***

problem solver	flexible	clear vision
get a grip mentality	empathetic	good listener
walks the walk	tenacity	able to prioritise
enthusiasm	dynamic	energy
caring	confident	kindness
negotiating skills	able to make decisions	resilient
hard working	inspiring	responsive
quick thinker	passionate	patient
able to take responsibility	holistic	able to challenge
open	creative	brave
determined	high expectations	able to coach
consultative	humility	strategic thinker
motivational	calmness	risk taker
approachability	emotionally intelligent	integrity
sense of reality	pupil centred	organised
objective	able to complete tasks	firm but fair
role model	efficient	interchangeable
lead from the front	sensitive to needs of others	persistent
stand up for beliefs	influential	knowledgeable
multi-tasker	be all things to all people	forward thinker
high expectations	good team builder	supportive
non confrontational	able to challenge behaviour	able to prioritise
inspirational	able to create boundaries	energetic
optimistic	able to read between the lines	dedicated
someone with lots of strategies		reflective

There is increasing interest in the emotions and behaviours of mainstream school leaders and the realisation that the head teacher's emotions will impact on the school. This is echoed in the literature generated from the views or perceptions of mainstream head teachers and their role (Murphy, 1992,

Hodgkinson, 1991, West-Bumham 1997). There is a clear link between the findings of the perceptions of the head teacher of mainstream schools and the key stakeholders' perceptions of the emotions and behaviour of a PRU head teacher in that all agree the head teacher's emotional intelligence will greatly impact on the success or failing of the school and the PRU.

### **8.1 Definition of Characteristics**

I analysed feedback from the respondents and found that there were six clear categories I was able to match against the descriptors agreed by the key stakeholders as essential behaviour and characteristics of a successful PRU head teacher. Initially the names of the categories were created from my own vocabulary, I did not look up the meaning of words I just used words that I believed described the characteristics identified by the respondents. The six category descriptors I used are;

- Demanding/challenging
- Pastoral
- Thoughtful/thinker
- Innovative
- Strategic
- Committed

I did not refer to a dictionary or thesaurus for accepted definitions of the descriptors I used until I had created my definition to explain the categories I decided on. The Cambridge Advanced Learner dictionary (2008) defines each category as:

1. Demanding/challenging: something needing great mental effort / difficult, in a way that tests your ability.
2. Pastoral: describes part of the work of the teacher or priest that involves help and advice.
3. Thoughtful/thinker: has a thoughtful approach to work / someone who consider important subject, a political or religious thinker.
4. Innovative: produces changes and new ideas.
5. Strategic: detailed plan to achieve success in situation such as war, politics or business.

6. Committed: promise or give your loyalty, time or money to a particular principle.

I produced a table to shows how I have linked the behaviours agreed by respondents to each of the categories identified. Each category is then presented with evidence from feedback to support each of the categories. As an introduction to each of the characteristics I have written a definition of that characteristic, created from evidence provided by respondents.

**Table 11: Characteristic Categories**

<b>Demanding/Challenging</b>	<b>Pastoral</b>	<b>Thoughtful/Thinker</b>
Get a grip mentality High expectations Determined Able to complete tasks Firm but fair Efficient Able to challenge behaviour Able to create boundaries Able to challenge Integrity	Humility Sensitive to needs of others All things to all people Calmness Emphatic Supportive Caring Patient Emotionally intelligent Approachability Good team builder Able to coach good listener	Integrity Negotiation skills Thinker Able to take responsibility Able to prioritise Knowledgeable Organised Objective Able to read between the lines Open
<b>Innovative</b>	<b>Strategic</b>	<b>Committed</b>
Multi-tasker Inspiring creative Quick thinker Motivational Someone with lots of strategies Risk taker Innovative Interchangeable Optimistic Dynamic Problem solver	Forward thinker Holistic Clear vision Sense of reality Consultative Responsive Consultative flexible	Walk the walk Role model Passionate Hard working Brave Energetic Dedicated Stand up for beliefs Persistent Resilient enthusiasm

## **8.2 Demanding/Challenging**

### Definition

*A professional who has very high expectations of him/herself, the staff they support and the students they guide. They are clear about the boundaries and will challenge inappropriate student or staff behaviour that does not enable student and staff success. There are clear consequences as well as clear and valued rewards.*

There was behaviour that respondents described as essential in a successful PR head teacher that caused them to prefix their story with “...I’m not sure how to say this...”, “...this sounds a bit hard...” or “...I don’t want this to sound negative...” I asked how they would describe this behaviour, ‘demanding’ and ‘challenging’ were used most times, and respondents also described this behaviour as ‘tough’ and ‘firm but fair’. Most respondents seemed to recognise that what they were describing could be interpreted as being ‘aggressive’ or as one respondent put it ‘unfeeling’ but the census was that this behaviour was an essential element of the overall makeup of a successful PRU Head.

One respondent prefixed her story to me by saying that she didn’t want me or anyone to think that her head teacher was hard or detached or unapproachable but:

- “...she just means what she says...she leads all the induction meetings, she’s very clear about expectations, not only of the students and parents but she lets them know what they can expect from staff at the school...during the meetings she’s very straight talking and makes it clear that the usual excuses students make for their behaviour is not going to wash...she lists the usual excuses... the classes were too big, nobody listened, other students caused problems and blamed them, I was wound up, the work was too hard...I think she takes them back a bit because they don’t expect a Head to be straight talking, she then lists what’s different... the main message is that students are responsible for their own behaviour and that she expects students to come to us and behave like any other student in a mainstream school...there is no excuse for not doing the right thing...” (3Wmb07)

When I read back to the respondent what she had said she smiled:

- “...my God, I’m making her sound like a sergeant major...well she is a bit like one but a kind one...she doesn’t start off like that but she can become one when she needs to...hope that makes any sense...” (3Wmb07)

Two newly appointed PRU teachers describing experiences with their new head teacher, both teachers started their posts at the same time in the same PRU:

- *“... he likes to include all staff in planning ... he even involves domestic staff ...” (1Mcd07)*

I asked if they saw this as a good example of good team working

- *“...I do but more importantly I think this is a strong way of demonstrating his expectations ... letting us know what he wants from us ... you see if we’re all involved we can’t then say we knew nothing about it ... all staff have clear objectives for increasing chances for the students... he checks that you’ve understood what he has said and that you are working toward it...he is quite demanding in this way but he does it nicely and in a way that reminds you that you agreed to this... it’s quite smart really...” (1Mmcd07)*

I asked about feedback, how they knew if they were doing what is expected.

- *“...he’s gives very specific feedback not only to us as staff but to the kids as well... he’s pretty fair he sees the good as well as the things that need to be improved... but he expects to see the improvement...he will challenge you if you don’t do what you’ve agreed to do...he will tell you how you are doing...it is very clear what he says there is no betting about the bush...” (1Mmcd07)*

A Youth Worker working in a KS4 PRU and a member of the Management Committee discussed the PRU head teacher they worked with:

- *“...she doesn’t tolerate staff using excuses from our personal lives for slacking... she says that personal problems must be left at the front door... she’s very clear that that as adults you choose to work in PRU, students don’t... she’s clear that we’re paid to do a professional job and as paid adults we’ve got to remember that we’re working with children and they have a right to an education ...she knows what’s right and how to do the right thing...she makes sure that you do the right thing...I hope this doesn’t sound as though she is always like this, she isn’t, but she can be when she needs to be...” (2Mma08)*

I was interested to hearing how the Youth Worker had described the head teacher. I explained that Bennis (1985, 1989), an American psychologist uses 'doing the right thing and doing the thing right' to describe differences between 'Leaders and Managers', I asked if she was describing her Head in terms of being a Leader or Manager

- *"...to be honest I'm not sure what the differences are...I used this term because it's what my Head says to us as a team when she is reminding us of our responsibility to the students...all the students come first in her eyes, she expects that from all the staff as well...this is hard to start because you might think that the students come before anything...but when you see that she will support you to do the right thing...then you understand why she expects so much... to her doing the right thing means you have to do it right...she won't take anything less...that's now what I understand and aim for..." (2Mma08)*

Staff from other agencies had stories to tell and described how a successful Head can turn young people around to enable them to deal with difficult situations. The Youth Offender Team work closely with PRUs, particularly those working with secondary students, a worker describes their experiences:

- *"...I'd been working with this boy for about 18 months...yes, he was trouble, yes, he had been aggressive and yes he had been excluded from two mainstream schools...I came to the PRU with the student and the parent, to be honest my thoughts were how long will he be here...we were all in for a surprise...the Head is no spring chicken but she really laid the law down...she wasn't frightened of him like others had been and she challenged everything...she told him that now he was at her school he would achieve and that he would leave school with qualifications...she was clear there were lots of battles but she was determined that he would come to school and work...and he did...he left school with 3 GCSE's and a place at college...no-one thought this could happen, I certainly didn't...no other Head or teacher in either of his previous schools had been so determined to get the best from this boy...he wasn't the only one...all her students leave school with qualifications and with a training place to go on to...I think*



*that is what is different about her...she knows that students will have ups and downs and they will challenge every rule every boundary but she challenges them back...its not easy, it has to be energy sapping...she sounds like a bit of a dragon and to be honest she is very straight talking...she doesn't only expect the students to work and do the right thing she expects the same from her staff and from us and we don't even work for her...the truth is people might complain but everyone is trying to get their kids into her school, her staff never what to leave and she's always being asked to present at conferences not only in education but with social services, YOT and health... "*  
(1Wmd07)

Schein (1994) describes Theory X as being a cynical view of human nature whereas Theory Y is a more idealistic view of human nature. I would certainly agree that Theory X is a very cynical view of the world; however, the category 'demanding / challenging' may suggest that it belongs alongside McGregor's (1960) Theory X. Respondents have described how the successful PRU head teacher '*...challenges staff if they have not met agreed targets, or not done what they have agreed to do...*' (1mcd07). From McGregor's interpretation of workers attitudes it could be suggested that the PRU head teacher does not trust the staff team but checks what staff have done or not done, achieved or not achieved. Respondents have also discussed how the PRU head teacher also deals with students in a similar way.

One respondent talked about how a member of staff contacted their union for support after a meeting with the head teacher:

- '*...we had a teacher with us that just wasn't doing what they should... when the Head is celebrating with you and telling you how well you are doing you don't mind him being straight talking...when you know that you haven't and he is straight talking that can be hard to swallow...nobody wants to be found out that they are cutting corners or that you are not cutting the mustard...people can get over sensitive then but of course you can't have it both ways... that's when people complain and talk about involving unions and things not being fair...it's*

*about doing the right thing really...the Head always says all he wants is for us to do the right thing by the students..." (2Mme08)*

What this response demonstrates is that there is a difference between the behaviour of the successful PRU Head Teacher and what is described in McGregor's (1960) Theory X. What is clear is that the successful PRU Head Teacher starts from the basis and philosophy of McGregor's Theory Y: that staff do take responsibility; staff do know what is right and does what is agreed:

- *"...he always gives you support and advice and will help you loads...but the bottom line is if you don't take notice of the help then you have to take responsibility..." (3Wmg07)*

The successful PRU head teacher also recognises that at different times we all need support to achieve and that this is not a failing. The PRU head teacher sees 'asking for advice' as strength in staff and students: in this situation a member of staff or student recognises areas in themselves that need development:

- *"... to be honest I found it hard when I started, I was a bit worried about how to manage the students, but the Head was really good...I think he could see I was a bit anxious but he didn't let the students get away with anything around me...he worked with me to challenge the students and really settle me into my job...but now I have no excuses I am expected to do the job...most of the students don't know how to behave so when the Head is clear about what they should or shouldn't do it makes it easier for them...that is how it was for me the Head was clear...if I am being honest it provided me with a safety net..." (3Wmj07)*

The PRU head teacher uses this style in order to make sure that 'best quality' is in place and that both staff and students are kept safe. It is clear from all respondents that a successful PRU head teacher exhibits this behaviour only when a staff member or a student 'do not' take responsibility, they do not make the effort to achieve what they have agreed.

McGregor's (1960) Theory X suggests that workers have to have 'power wielded over them', this suggest that a person only get results because they have things to offer e.g. security, wages and this is seen as negative. However, respondents all identify the need for this behaviour in a successful PRU head teacher. Feedback from respondents suggests strongly that this behaviour is one of the most important skills or behaviours a successful PRU head teacher exhibits.

Gleick's (1987) principle '*very similar conditions can result in very dissimilar outcomes*' is clearly demonstrated in the suggestion of respondents that a successful PRU head teacher should have the characteristic or skill to be challenging or demanding of their staff. They should, as described by Burns (1978) and McGregor's (1960) look at staff as being '*lazy*' or '*wield power*' over their workers. Waldman, Bass and Einstein (1987) found that workers were more satisfied when working with Transformational Leaders, whereas those working with Transactional Leaders were less satisfied. Howell and Hall-Marenda (1999) found that employees perceived the relationship with Transactional Leader was negative. The very 'dissimilar outcome' that is coming out of this research is that all sample groups are clear that a successful head teacher must have the ability to be 'challenging and demanding' and that without this staff can feel unsafe, it is clear that respondents want the PRU head teacher to be able to 'manage' (as described in Theory X and Transactional Leadership) some situations, they must be able to set high expectations and challenge those, student or staff member, when those expectations are not being met.

**Table 12: Demanding/Challenging Summary**

PRU Head Teacher Intention	<b>Staff:</b> <i>The best service for the PRU students and your colleagues</i> <b>Students:</b> <i>your past is not your potential</i>
Style in a phrase	<i>'You know what you should have done, you haven't done it - now you do as I say'</i>
When this style works best	<b>Staff:</b> <i>when there is a crisis - staff not working with commitment, poor teaching and learning, poor quality of partnership with students and other staff</i> <b>Student:</b> <i>crisis – expectations and boundaries made clear and student not working appropriately within</i>

	<i>the boundaries and expectations</i>
Overall impact	<p><b>Staff:</b> Positive for the staff members when they see that a staff member is being challenged and 'told' to take responsibility for their professional behaviour. Would be perceived as negative if this was the only skill the PRU Head Teacher had – this would result very quickly in a failing PRU</p> <p><b>Students:</b> Initially could be negative as students 'butt up' against boundaries, consistency by the PRU Head Teacher will quickly turn this to positive impact for student group. Students will see that boundaries are in place, this helps eliminates bullying, students feel safe, students feel empowered to see they can achieve. Positive for whole staff team, staff will feel safe; they are able to work in an environment that allows them to teach.</p>

### 8.3 Pastoral

#### Definition

*A professional who is sensitive to the needs of staff and students and who will enable them to achieve. They are supportive and are able to create an environment where students, staff and other professionals feel able to ask for help and share concerns.*

I met with a number of staff from small PRUs of varying size as well as professionals who link with PRUs. Respondents from the sample groups talked about the more challenging aspects of the head teacher's qualities but also spoke a lot about what I have described as the 'pastoral' element of the Head:

- *"...we've got a big PRU and you can get lost but our Head is a watcher and listener, she's really aware... you can tell her that you need a bit of help but most of the time she asks you if you need some help...our Head listens and hears what you're saying, I went to her and said that I thought I was struggling, she gave me time and space to talk as well as putting things in place to help me..." (2We07)*

Respondents described the behaviour of 'listening and watching' not only in dealing with them as a staff team but also in how the students were supported:

- *“...she’s not only like this with us as staff but also with the students and the parents...she’s got this ‘open door’ policy not only for the staff and students but other professionals and the parents are always welcome...” (2Wg07)*

A newly appointed teacher described how the PRU head teacher made them feel valued as they started their new role in a PRU. They described how the head teacher was willing to work with them to make sure they knew what was expected but was sensitive to anxieties that may be present when trying ‘new’ things:

- *“...she knows how you feel...well that’s what it feels like to me and to others I’ve spoken with...she doesn’t put pressure on you, well she does but only in a way to make you go forward, she will always find a way of helping...one of the best things about our Head is that she will get her hands dirty...she comes in to the class and ‘team teaches’ with us...you learn a lot from her...it makes you feel as though she taking you forward...if she sees something that you have done well, she tells you, she talks about it in staff meetings...it makes you feel valued...” (2Mmd08)*

Respondents talked about how the head teacher used these skills to work with the students to change direction with their behaviour. Respondents feel these skills were particularly effective when there has been a crisis and the situation needs to be made safe emotionally and physically...when students or staff needed a more ‘gentle touch’ to move them forward and help them refocus.

- *“...you can see her working the kids...one minute they’re seething, boiling over, she sits with them, listens to them and starts talking to them...you can almost see the physical change in them...almost relaxing...she always says ‘your past is not your potential’, and she means it...the kids trust her...sometimes they hate her because she sets boundaries and keeps to them...but somehow when it seems as though they’re really angry she manages to turn them...they believe that she trusts them...she always does what she says she will, so they trust her...they might not always like what she does but they know they*

*can trust her...the most important thing though is how she listens to them...even if she has been telling them off minutes earlier...” (2Mma08)*

- *“...when things have gone wrong, what ever it is...he’s always there with the right words...I know when we had some problems with a member of staff and the Head had to get a bit heavy...the Head was still really patient, always ready to help even though they had caused problems...but to be fair that is what he’s always like...prepared to listen and prepared to help you move forward...watching him has helped me do things differently with the students...” (3Wmc07)*
- *“...you know not to disturb her when there’s been an incident and she’s speaking with staff as a debrief ...she’s makes it clear to me that this time is essential to staff...it doesn’t matter who wants to talk to her...she’s like this when she’s got students in her room talking to her about what they have been doing or when she is spending time with students during break...she says that spending time with the students during more relaxed times tells her a lot...how the students are feeling and how the staff are feeling...” (1Mmc07)*

A young member of staff talked about how he had struggled when he first came into his post as a PRU teacher, how the head teacher was sensitive to his anxieties and how she gave him confidence:

- *“...she’s been there...she’s not afraid to tell you how she struggled when she first started teaching students with behaviour problems... she doesn’t try to pretend she has always known the answers...she comes into the class gives that bit of space to let me get on with something else...she’s happy to work as an LSA in the class with you ...not many Heads will do that... was struggling with one group of students, they were particularly difficult with a number of learning difficulties...I was worried to ask for help I thought it might sound as though I couldn’t cut it...she came to me and said that she could see that the group I was working with had a greater number of difficulties in literacy than the other groups and that she should have picked this up earlier...it was like she was taking responsibility... she put extra staff in*

*the classroom for me to use, no fuss no blaming she just did it... I have been in other teaching situations and you would have been left to struggle no extra help would have been there for you...all the students did well and I did well that term...on reflection I don't think the students did have greater difficulties, it was that I was having a few problems, she could see with a little extra support I would do ok and do a good job..." (1Wmd07)*

**Table 13: Pastoral Summary**

PRU Head Teacher intention	<b>Staff:</b> I'm working with you to improve your chances and the chances of our students <b>Student:</b> I've got faith in you, I will show you which 'road' to take
Style in a phrase	<i>'I know you can do it – let's try this</i>
When this style works best	<b>Staff:</b> supporting staff to cope with change in terms of strategies when working with students and when staff are coping with more strategic changes <b>Student:</b> as a strategy in de-escalating conflict, when students are being introduced to new tasks and there are levels of anxiety, tool to use in avoiding crisis
Overall impact	<b>Staff:</b> can be seen by some staff as negative if they do not want to 'change, but overall very positive when staff experience <b>Student:</b> sense of belonging and being cared for

#### **8.4 Thoughtful/Thinker**

##### Definition

*A professional who is cerebral, who is evidence based, clear thinking, able to analyse feedback and use that information to problem solve and move opportunities forward for students and other professionals.*

Feedback from two of the sample groups provided the basis for this category. The sample groups 'key stakeholders' and 'LEA Officers' both talked about the ability to 'process information' at different levels. A strength that these two groups identified was the ability to take information from a 'higher level' and transpose the information so that students, carers and other non-professionals could take on the information to enable them to move forward:

- *"...I have to say that our PRU head has excellent organisational skills...I am always amazed how she is able to absorb information and*

*rework it into information that everyone can understand...she keeps her staff up to date with things...she makes things uncomplicated...* (1Mma07)

- *"...he is well read, he keeps himself up to date with initiatives and is able to interpret them...what I mean is guidance can sometimes be very wordy but he is able to cut to the meat of a document and explain it..."* (1Wmf07)
- *"...my role is about statistics and a lot of people not from my department find it difficult, she is able to absorb our sort of information quickly... she's really good at using this information to plan and demonstrate why she's made a decision..."* ((1Mme07)
- *"...I'm not sure if you call it 'thinking outside the box' or plain old 'problem solving'...but life in any PRU is always very complex and without the ability to problem solve safely the PRU can go down hill quickly..."* (Mmb07)

I wondered if the Head needed to be the problem solver, or could it be another staff member? Respondents were clear that the head teacher needed to be the person directing. It was felt that because of the complexity of the life of PRUs that if another staff member was to 'take over' it would very quickly cause problems:

- *"...it would not be such a problem in a large comprehensive school where different staff have clearly marked out responsibility and students understand that... the average PRU student is very different...that is why they are not in the mainstream school..."* (2Wmb07)

I met with a small group of respondents who were members of the Management Committees that supported three PRUs in one county. For this group of respondents, the ability to organise, being evidence based, analyse and impart information was ranked highly in what they perceived as essential skills of a successful PRU head teacher:

- *"...if I had been asked what I thought makes a good PRU head teacher before I joined the Management Committee I am not sure that I would*



*have given you the same response...I know that they have to be able to communicate with the students and to have empathy...but the need to be academic or intellectual or at least be able to think intellectually is something I would not have even thought about...I would now..."* (2Mmb08)

- *"...we have one PRU that is very successful, one moving forward with one that is struggling...there is a difference between the heads...the Head Teacher from the successful PRU is much more aware of what is happening in the wider education world...she doesn't only know what is happening in the PRU world but in education in general...the two other Head Teachers are stuck in their PRU world which makes it difficult to move them on..."* (1Mmh07)
- *"...the evidence is clear to us that the thinking skills of our successful head is important... we've asked her to mentor one of the other PRU heads...she isn't working with the students but working with the head teacher...you can see a difference in the Head, his attitude, his reporting and preparation as well as pupil progress and a lowering of staff sickness...the head that is being supported is very good with the students so we know it's the extra bits that make the difference..."* (1Mmh07)

I met with teaching and non-teaching staff from a large PRU, not all staff were confident in openly contributing to the meeting, they did though support what was being said by others at the meeting. One young learning support assistant (LSA) spoke to me after the meeting, she wanted me to know that she was really happy:

- *"...what the Head is good at is providing evidence, proving why something has to change or why we have to try something different...he wanted to introduce some new training to all staff...I knew it was going to cause problems for some staff... his argument was so strong with evidence from up to date research and from other practitioners that even the most difficult of staff were on board...he does this with the students as well...he is clear that making decisions this way means that you see him taking responsibility his behaviour in*

*the same way he expects students to take responsibility for their behaviour...” (1Mma07)*

- *“...I am currently working toward an MEd and my tutor is the Head of a very good Secondary PRU in the next borough...she works for a university as a tutor for distance education students like myself...I was impressed by her academic knowledge not only in her field but in the wider world of education...it’s when they have this knowledge and run a good place that you know you can trust them...” (2Mmf08)*

I asked respondents if being able to analyse information or being able to absorb information were the only skills they recognised in a successful PRU head teacher or was there something additional. I wanted to find out if the ability to just be able to read information and understand was enough, but I was keen not to give the sense that I thought something was missing from their perception, I asked casually and tried to use a tone that could have been interpreted that we were at the end of the session. I did this so that respondents, if they had any other ideas, would have to take on the responsibility of re-engaging with the others to carry on with the discussion. I felt that by using this approach any further information offered did come from them voluntarily and not from any unconscious message I had sent out to them. There was no apparent response and people started to move to pack up their papers when one of the respondents started to talk. The other respondents settled back and began to also talk:

- *“...I think the ability to also to be objective with information is very important...you might be able to understand the principles of what you are reading about you also have to be able to make sensible judgments based on the information you have...” (2Wmk07)*
- *“...our Head is very passionate about her work but is always objective when she’s gathering information or making a decision...relationships she may have with staff or students never seem to influence her decisions...I interviewed with her last year, one of the people being interviewed was a good friend of her son’s and he had worked as a supply teacher for us at the PRU...he had done a very good job...but that meant nothing in the interview process...she appointed someone*

*else, I wanted her to appoint her son's friend as I had worked with him and developed a relationship with him...I was a bit unhappy...I have to say I can now see that her decision was correct, the new member of staff has done fantastic things... she told me that she was appointing this person for the benefit of the students not for the benefit of the staff..." (1Mmc07)*

**Table 14: Thoughtful/Thinker Summary**

PRU Head Teacher intention	<b>Staff:</b> decision making, provide sound advice and evidence of decision making <b>Student:</b> reasoned decision making
Style in a phrase	<i>Check all the options before moving forward or back</i>
When this style works best	<b>Staff:</b> planning for change for national and local initiatives, for developing staff understanding of government guidance <b>Student:</b> enabling students to be part of the decision making – when complicated information needs to be shared with students they are enabled to be 'included'
Overall impact	<b>Staff:</b> Positive <b>Student:</b> Positive

## **8.5 Innovative**

### Definition

*A professional who is creative in their thinking, is a quick thinker, able to multi-task with strategies that engage and enable.*

PRU teaching staff and non-teaching staff provided the main body of comments for this category. For non-teaching staff, who discussed experiences of working in a PRU that they perceived as a failing PRU it was the inability of the PRU head teacher to be quick thinking or creative in their thinking, non-teaching staff put this very high in their 'list' of skills and abilities that the PRU head teacher must have to be successful. During almost all of the data collection session's, respondents came to talk about positive experiences, however on this occasion a small number of non-teaching staff made the effort to come and find me to speak to me, they wanted to tell me their negative experiences. They were anxious that they 'put their case forward' to me, they felt strongly that because of their experiences they knew

what a PRU head teacher needed to be successful in the role and they felt that their negative experiences would be important to me.

I had arrived early at the venue and had about 45 minutes to prepare for this meeting; I explained that there was a meeting taking place soon and they would be very welcome to attend the meeting where we would all be sharing experiences. They informed me that they didn't usually work with the team I was meeting with and added *"...anyway they have a good Head..."* (2Mmcd08) I agreed to meet with them together before the planned meeting took place.

This was a different experience of data collection for me. Data for this category was 'given to me' as opposed to being 'collected' I was conscious of presenting data for this category differently; I am reporting on negative experiences as well as using feedback from those respondents who want to share more positive experiences of good practice.

I asked this first group of respondents what had happened or what was happening in the PRU that was influencing their perception so much that they wanted to speak to me alone.

- *"...at the end of the day we're protected a bit...we're not responsible for teaching or planning...we work under direction in a different way to the teaching staff...but in a way we see more than other staff because we don't have to worry so much about things as we are not big players in the decision making as such...it's the teachers you see it in first and then the students...when the Head isn't able to guide the teachers or give them advice on how to do things it just affects everyone...everyone starts to feel a bit lost...the Head is meant to have the knowledge and experience to help and guide everyone..."* (2Mmcd08)

I asked if they were saying that the teachers were the cause of poor behaviour in the students and not the head teacher:

- *“...no what I mean is that the Head let the teaching staff down first...they tried to carry on but the Head was just not able to keep on top of everything...they didn't seem to listen to anything that was being said so nothing changed...he had no new ideas, he just kept doing the same things all the time...students could see nothing was changing and they started to get worse...they were being let down...that's when it really started going down hill...” (2Mmcd08)*

I was very aware that one of the issues for this group of respondents was that changes were not made to improve situations even though they believed there was clear evidence available for the head teacher to make necessary changes to keep staff and students engaged and safe. What was important for the respondents is that they saw that I was listening to what they had to say. I deliberately recorded copious notes in front of them. Very quickly the tone and speed of speech changed, they soon appeared to become more relaxed. After spending a relatively short time, approximately 15 minutes, with the respondents and using this 'listening strategy' to support the respondents there was clear change in their communication and participation. They agreed to join the larger group I was meeting with.

Respondents talked about individual experiences and PRU head teachers they had worked with or were currently working with:

- *“...she's been doing the job for a long time...but she it doesn't matter what you bring to her she comes up with something... let's try this...have you done that...” 2Mmg08)*
- *“...one of her greatest strengths is the ability to problem solve...that I am sure comes from years of experiences...but she's not frightened of seeing the pupils as individuals ... her approaches are sometimes a bit risky e.g. a student who had been excluded from a residential EBD school was referred to us...staff in the special school had used restraint a lot of the time...she just refused to use this approach...an incident occurred and the student became very abusive and threatening...normally this student would have been restrained by a number of staff and the incident would have been over...she would not*

*restrain and told the pupil so...she said to him that she refused to take responsibility for his behaviour, he would have to do it himself...she told him that if she gets staff to stop him every time he can't have his way he will always need someone to stop him and that was not best for him...I was attending the PRU on that day and I have to say I was anxious as he was a big lad and was known for escalating situations...to be honest I was also surprised because the student did stop...he seemed to be a bit shocked I don't think the option of stopping himself was something he was used to...for me that was a risk...but she's always optimistic and say that trying something different will surprise them into changing..." (2Mmbg08)*

- *"...I only work with him when one of my students is in his PRU...I love working with him ...even though he's education and I'm social services I feel I learn something...he's got ideas...sometimes it's only change your tone or change the way you stand or sit or eye contact... I think his suggestions are creative, you know different ..." (3Wma07)*
- *"...his mantra is...if you always do what you've always done you will always get what you've always got..." (2Wmn07)*

**Table 15: Innovative Summary**

PRU Head Teacher intention	<b>Staff:</b> keep a safe environment that enables students and staff to keep moving forward <b>Students:</b> to move students forward enough to be able to take responsibility for themselves
Style in a phrase	<i>If we can't achieve they way we are working we must work in a way we can achieve</i>
When this style works best	<b>Staff:</b> in avoiding crisis <b>Students:</b> when supporting students to move forward encouraging them to avoid repeating the same mistakes
Overall impact	<b>Staff:</b> can be negative for some staff; will challenge some staff in that they may need to reflected on their own practice but overall positive <b>Students:</b> challenging for students in that they will have look at their own behaviour

## 8.6 Strategic

### Definition

*A professional who has a view to the future with a long term view to their planning and who understands that working with the whole person and all agencies is the way forward*

When respondents talked about a successful PRU head teacher as ‘seeing the bigger picture’ I struggled as to where I saw this behaviour being placed. For some time I thought it may fit in the section that described the ‘thoughtful thinker’ characteristic but after further discussions with respondents I realised that this behaviour is something different, it looked not only at the now but looked ahead :

- *“...what is different about the Head I am working with now is that you feel part of something bigger...in the last PRU I worked in the head lived in a little PRU world...you felt a little as though the world you work in is tiny...now the Head I work for sees things differently...here we are part of the education department...we’re part of the county directory as well...I know that may not be the fault of the head but she just fights for us differently...” (1Wmc07)*
- *“...our Head makes sure we get the same county training as the mainstream schools...its good meeting up with other teachers from different schools...you feel part of a bigger team as well as being able to share ideas and resources...” (1Wme07)*

Respondents talked about how the successful PRU head teacher does not get complacent in their planning for the future even if that does sometimes mean that the present is made a little more uncomfortable:

- *“...I am often surprised by his decision making...it would be easy to make some decisions differently as it would bring instant escape from situations but that is not always how he makes decisions...he knows that he is making his life harder in the short term but he says ‘you have to see the bigger picture...we were working with this lad, he was a real terror...there was an incident that this boy was involved in...to be fair he wasn’t the worst but we could have used the incident to have gotten*

*rid of him...but the Head wouldn't...he knew there were two other siblings that would be coming our way and if we were seen by the family not to have been fair with this boy then the siblings would also suffer...the Head said if we were able to work with the oldest boy then the mother and the younger boys would see us working fairly and this would help us work with the younger brothers...I wasn't convinced...but true to form two years later the twins arrived...they already knew us...they settled really well and are working well with staff...I now understand why the Head persevered, not only for the oldest child, who ended up doing well but also for the twins..."*  
(1Wmh07)

Respondents also talked about how a successful PRU head teacher plans for the future, the curriculum resources, budgeting and staffing:

- *"...our Head has worked with us all to review and create our new 'development plan'...when I first came to work at my present job I had never been part of 'planning'...I think that is because the Head was different they liked to keep it to themselves...but here we are all part of it...I feel better knowing where I am going...for me because the Head works differently with us I am changing my way of thinking when I am planning what I am doing with my students...it just gives you a different way of thinking..."* (1Wmk07)
- *"...I am the accountant that has responsibility for working with the PRUs in our authority...currently we have two PRU head teachers that are very good at budgeting for the longer term...that has not always been the case...some years ago I worked with a PRU head teacher that did not see past a week at a time, spending was erratic in that promises were made without any understanding of the impact of the budget as a whole...at one stage the entire annual budget had been literally spent by the January...there was chaos...we lost a full time member of staff as well as having to cancel students activities...the authority changed the PRU head teacher job description after that..."*  
(1Wmh07)



**Table 16: Strategic Summary**

PRU Head Teacher intention	<b>Staff:</b> protecting resources as well as jobs <b>Student:</b> developing equal opportunities
Style in a phrase	<i>Seeing the bigger picture</i>
When this style works best	<b>Staff:</b> PRU self evaluation – development plans <b>Student:</b> Student evaluation – do we have to make changes for future student success
Overall impact	<b>Staff:</b> positive provides security and sense of belonging <b>Student:</b> positive for the student of tomorrow

## **8.7 Committed**

### Definition

*A professional who is a 'doer' as well as a talker, gets the work done and is persistent in their drive to achieve success, will challenge the rights of the child and the rights of other professionals.*

This characteristic was described in general by younger teaching staff and learning support staff. Before I had the opportunity to meet face to face with respondents it was not clear to me if there was any significance in why these two groups of respondents were more sensitive to this particular behaviour. After reflecting on the data and speaking directly with two learning support assistants from different PRUs and a young teacher, a very tentative link did become clear. How the support staff described the head teacher suggested they perceived the Head Teacher had a status that excluded them from performing normal day to day chores in a PRU. All respondents were impressed by the behaviour of the PRU head teacher they now work with, for them the ability or willingness to 'work' is an essential element of a successful PRU head teacher:

- *"...the thing for me is she just does anything...if the dinner lady isn't in she serves the dinner to the students...one day I saw her sweeping the yard because the caretaker was off sick...I didn't expect her to be prepared to 'get her hands dirty'...she won't ask anyone else to do something she won't do herself...she's really committed..." (2Mmcd08)*
- *"...I have to be honest I thought that when you get to be a head teacher you have a different status...people look up to you...they get things done for them...not this Head...she have a real commitment to*

*the PRU...she does what is needed to make it right for the kids and us...she doesn't ask me to do anything she wouldn't do herself..." (1Mmb07)*

- *"...in my last place the Head never really got 'stuck in'...he gave advice but then let you get on with it...I suppose I was used to seeing the head as above us all...I've been impressed with how my new head sees it different...he is prepared to be part of the team...if it needs doing he says get it done...I thought it was maybe a man thing when I worked with my first Head but it isn't, they're both men...I think it is just about your approach..." (1Wmc07)*

Feedback from other respondents talked about the sense of responsibility to the role as an essential quality in a successful PRU head teacher:

- *"...our Head takes her responsibility very seriously...we all do I know, but she will fight for the right of the student much more than I think I would sometimes...we've had a situation recently when one student assaulted another...there had been a number of problems with this student and it ended up him being excluded...she of course had to put in an exclusion because students have a right to come to school and feel safe...but that wasn't the end of it she also got into a number of battles over the student that been excluded...she believed he has a right to education as well...and put a lot of pressure on the authority to put in appropriate tuition for the excluded student making sure he still sat his exams...at the end of the day I know that the boy excluded has the right to be educated but the violence he showed toward the other student and the head when she was dealing with the incident was pretty awful...in a way everyone would have been supportive if she had just turned away from the problem...but no she believed that someone needed to fight the student's corner to make sure he had the best chance of successful, which she did..." (1Wmdo7)*

**Table 17: Committed Summary**

PRU Head Teacher intention	<b>Staff:</b> <i>if it needs doing then get it done</i> <b>Students:</b> <i>do what needs to be done and you will get what you need</i>
Style in a phrase	<i>If you don't succeed the first time, try again</i>
When this style works best	<b>Staff:</b> <i>when placing demands on staff they must see that the Head will not ask them to do anything they will not do themselves</i> <b>Students:</b> <i>after dealing with crisis and trying to re-engage students, defending the rights of the students</i>
Overall impact	<b>Staff:</b> <i>very positive</i> <b>Students:</b> <i>very positive</i>

This chapter has provided shape to the perception of key stakeholders and my own interpretation of the data. Although a step forward the model can not stand on its own, the next chapter looks at the model against Maslow and McGregor.

*Identifying the six characteristics of a successful head teacher felt like a 'hallelujah experience', a sense of celebration, proud that I had seen something different. However very quickly, my new higher level thinking surfaced and I realised that I had to test my findings. Was what I was saying already being said about successful PRU head teachers? I had to check. This was a difficult stage of my research; but I wanted to be sure that my analysis would offer something to this field - did the PRU head teacher need to be something different to being just a leader or manager.*

In this section I have looked at each of the characteristics and compared and interrogated them against Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' and McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y. I used two theories as tools in analysing behaviours and skills identified by sample groups as essential elements of a successful PRU head teacher.

### **9.1 Demanding/Challenging**

*A professional who has very high expectations of themselves, the staff they support and the students they guide. They are clear about the boundaries and will challenge inappropriate student or staff behaviour that does not enable student and staff success. There are clear consequences as well as clear and valued rewards.*

Schein (1994) describes Theory X as being a cynical view of human nature whereas Theory Y is a more idealistic view of human nature (Morrison 1998). I would certainly agree that Theory X is a very cynical view of the world; however, the category 'demanding / challenging' identified suggested that it belongs alongside McGregor's (1960) Theory X. Respondents have described how the successful PRU head teacher "...challenges staff if they have not met agreed targets, or not done what they have agreed to do..." (1Mmcd07). From McGregor's interpretation of workers attitudes it could be

suggested that the PRU head teacher does not trust the staff team but checks what staff have done or not done, achieved or not achieved. Respondents have also discussed how the PRU head teacher also deals with students in the same way.

One respondent talked about how a member of staff contacted their union for support after a meeting with the head teacher:

- *“...we had a teacher with us that just wasn’t doing what they should... when the Head is celebrating with you and telling you how well you are doing you don’t mind him being straight talking...when you know that you haven’t and he is straight talking that can be hard to swallow...nobody wants to be found out that they are cutting corners or that you are not cutting the mustard...people can get over sensitive then but of course you can’t have it both ways... that’s when people complain and talk about involving unions and things not being fair...it’s about doing the right thing really...the head always says all he wants is for us to do the right thing by the students...” (2Mme08)*

What this response demonstrates is that there is a difference between the behaviour of the successful PRU head teacher and what is described in McGregor’s (1960) Theory X. What is clear is that the successful PRU head teacher starts from the basis and philosophy of McGregor’s Theory Y: that staff do take responsibility; staff do know what is right and do what is agreed:

- *“...he always gives you support and advice and will help you loads...but the bottom line is if you don’t take notice of the help then you have to take responsibility...” (3Wmg07)*

Data also suggested that the successful PRU head teacher recognised that needing support to achieve was not a failing but a strength when staff and students recognised areas in themselves that needed development:

- *“... to be honest I found it hard when I started, I was a bit worried about how to manage the students, but the Head was really good...I think he could see I was a bit anxious but he didn’t let the students get away with anything around me...he worked with me to challenge the*

*students and really settle me into my job...but now I have no excuses I am expected to do the job...most of the students don't know how to behave so when the Head is clear about what they should or shouldn't do it makes it easier for them...that is how it was for me, the Head was clear...if I am being honest it provided me with a safety net..."*  
(3Wmj07)

Doing the '*right thing*' creates a '*safety net*', not only in the sense of being safe and not getting physically hurt but also in the sense of staying within the boundaries and keeping your position safe. Maslow's (1943, 1954) '*safety needs*' describes how individuals need to be free from the threat of physical and emotional harm, the need to maintain their property and job so that they can provide food and shelter. The respondent who describes what they perceive as why the head teacher behaves in this challenging/demanding way suggested that the Head Teacher is starting from the point of wanting to support staff to have the required knowledge in order to 'keep safe, "...*he always gives you support and advice and will help you loads...*", however, as the quote continues "...*but the bottom line is if you don't take notice of the help then you have to take responsibility...*" (3Wmg07) these comments could suggest something less positive and could be interpreted as a threat to the '*safety needs*' within Maslow's (1943, 1945) '*Hierarchy of Needs*'.

Feedback does suggest that the PRU head teacher uses this style in order to make sure that 'best quality' is in place and that both staff and students are kept safe. Repeating Maslow (1943, 1954) '*safety needs*': people are motivated to achieve tasks so that their job is safe and they will be secure. It is clear from all respondents that a successful PRU head teacher exhibits this behaviour only when a staff member or a student 'does not' take responsibility, they do not make the effort to achieve what they have agreed. Is this suggesting that generally people do not take responsibility, supporting McGregor's (1960) Theory X which states that workers have to have 'power wielded over them' in order to achieve?

This behaviour is difficult to place within either McGregor's or Maslow's work. The respondents' perception is that the style is supportive and keeps staff 'safe' in that the style sets out clear expectations. However, an 'overuse' of this style would place great pressure on workers and create an atmosphere of distrust, representing McGregor's Theory X.

If looking at this characteristic through 'chaos and complexity tinted glasses', it meets Gleick's (1987) principle of '*very similar conditions can result in very dissimilar outcomes*'. McGregor's (1960) Theory X discusses how the behaviour of the manager or Theory X type is often challenging or demanding on staff because they believe they are 'inherently lazy and must be induced or forced to make the effort'; a behaviour that could easily be interpreted by workers as bullying. However, respondents are clear that a successful Head Teacher must have the ability to be 'challenging and demanding' and that without that ability staff can feel unsafe, it is clear that respondents want the PRU Head Teacher to be able to 'manage', as described in Theory X, some situations, they must be able to set high expectations and challenge those, student or staff member, when those expectations are not being met.

## **9.2 Pastoral**

*A professional who is sensitive to the needs of staff, students and will enable them to achieve. They are supportive and are able to create an environment where students, staff and other professionals feel able to ask for help and share concerns.*

Data collected would suggested that this characteristic links with two of Maslow's (1943, 1954) needs: '*belonging/social needs*' and '*esteem needs*'. Respondents have described how a successful PRU head teacher is a '*listener and a watcher*', '*knows how you feel*, and is always there '*with the right words*'. Respondents are clear that feeling the sense that you are being 'listened to' develop relationships within teams and being part of those relationships has created a sense of belonging to the team, the group and the school. Most people have different experiences of belonging which they use and work to survive in. For example, I belong to my family, my friendship

group, my hockey team, my staff group, to the LEA my team works in, my country etc. this may sound simple but of course it is not. There is always variation and exceptions, however the principle is the same, I like most other humans need to experience a sense of belonging. In practice however the number of groups you can belong to is limited, because of time available to us and the complexities of trying to manage different relationships and expectations. Having '*pastoral*' characteristics enable the PRU head teacher to create an environment where staff and for students can work together, the complexities of understanding and managing the many different relationships and expectations is helped along by the skills of the PRU head teacher. The PRU head teacher helps develop a sense of belonging, understanding and similarity e.g. "...*she's been there...she's not afraid to tell how she struggled when she first started teaching...*" (1Wmd07). This sense of belonging will be essential if conflict of interests arises within the PRU e.g. when changes need to be made within the PRU or challenges to staff and students, changes that may potentially cause pressures for staff and students. The head teacher can use the 'strong sense of belonging' within the team to remind staff and students of the need to work together to face challenges and go on to achieve. According to McGregor's (1960) Theory Y, work is necessary for '*a person's psychological well-being and development*', how respondents have described this PRU head teacher, is clearly linked to an individual's state of well-being. Being accepted and belonging to a 'group' will support the state of feeling safe and secure.

This category also demonstrates behaviour that is linked to Maslow's (1943, 1954) '*esteem needs*' and what McGregor's (1960) describes in his Theory Y as higher level needs. Respondents described the mantra of one PRU head teacher, '*your past is not your potential*', this is a clear message to students and staff that no matter where you started from you can still go forwards and achieve. When the staff and students feel that their errors will not be held against them and that it is still possible to achieve, a sense of worth is created. Maslow (1943, 1954) '*esteem needs*' highlights an individuals' need to be respected by others and to have respect for themselves. We do this by pursuing activities, for example hobbies, academic study and within our



professional life. What respondents have described in this category are behaviour or skills that create within staff and students a sense of being valued.

### **9.3 *Thoughtful/Thinker***

*A professional who is cerebral, who is evidence based, clear thinking, able to analyse feedback and use that information to problem solve and move opportunities forward for students and other professionals.*

McGregor's (1960) Theory X assumes that people need direction, the ability to decode information and direct staff in the meaning of the information could be interpreted as behaviour linked to Theory X, "...he keeps himself up to date with initiatives and is able to interpret them..." (1Wmf07). The ability to understand complicated information and statistics could easily be a tool for someone to gain a position of power over staff. Not sharing information has been cited by respondents as a negative behaviour and linked to a failing PRU head teacher. Having information that others do not have will enable someone to achieve power and this could raise 'self esteem' in that person. Maslow (1943, 1954) says that 'self-esteem' needs may be classified in two subsidiary sets; firstly the desire to have strength in facing the world, strength, independence, freedom and achievement, secondly desire for reputation or prestige, recognition and sense of importance. These emotions lead a person to feel useful and necessary in the world (Green 2000). Possessing information that will change or influence the work lives of others would certainly give someone a 'sense of importance in the world', the opposite to this emotion are feelings of inferiority and weakness, which are emotions that may be felt by those who are not provided with importance and work life changing information, for example PRU staff.

This is not however how respondents have perceived this behaviour. Respondents describe this behaviour in an enabling way:

- "...I am always amazed how she is able to absorb information and rework it in to information that everyone can understand..." (1Wwa07)

LEA Officers, in particular were clear that a successful PRU head teacher must be able to analyse feedback and information to plan and problem solve complex situations. One LEA Officer actually identified this characteristic as the one behaviour that resulted in a successful or failing PRU head teacher:

- *“...we have one PRU that is very successful, one moving forward with one that is struggling... the head teacher from the successful PRU is much more aware...the two others are stuck in their PRU...” (Mma07)*

How this characteristic is perceived by respondents strongly links in to Maslow's (1943, 1954) '*belonging needs*' and '*self esteem needs*' of staff. The successful PRU head teacher is aware of the evidence that says there is a need for staff to work together when planning to move students or raise standards. To do this it is important that people do feel part of the whole team and the sharing of information will enable that. Maslow (1943, 1954) describes how when a person feels that they 'belong', there develops a desire of importance or recognition by others, the ability of the head teacher to bring to their staff team clear thinking and evidence based approaches to change and develop will bring these emotions to the staff team, staff will feel included and feel they have decision-making power as plans and strategies are created and developed to move forward.

As I reflected on this characteristic it did become clearer to me how this characteristic would be easier to be 'seen from the outside' i.e. LEA Officers and Key Stakeholder sample groups. The daily life of a PRU does need clear thinking and the ability to problem solve. However longer term changes and developments come from the bigger world and that means local and government initiatives and demands. The successful PRU head teacher must take the demands from the outside world and transport them into the smaller world of the PRU. It will be the LEA Officers and other key stakeholders who need to see this can be done.

#### **9.4 Innovative**

*A professional that is creative in their thinking, is a quick thinker, able to multi-task with strategies that engage and enable.*

Not possessing this characteristic was perceived by respondents to be a major concern, respondents felt that without the ability to be creative thinkers when dealing with crisis or when planning development or strategies would lead to staff and students feeling let down:

- “...Head let the teaching staff down ... the Head was just not able to keep on top of everything... nothing changed... no new ideas... the same things all the time...he were being let down...that’s when it really started going down hill...” (Mmcd08)
- “...when the Head isn’t able to guide the teachers...everyone starts to feel a bit lost...the Head is meant to have the knowledge and experience to help and guide everyone...” (2Mmcd08)

McGregor (1960) formulated six basic assumptions for Theory Y; one of which states the need for a high degree of imagination and creativity in solving problems within the work place, the ability to ‘*come up with the answers*’ is seen by respondents as essential. The need to feel that a situation has a solution is the need to feel safe. Maslow’s (1943, 1954) ‘*safety needs*’ discusses how a preference of uninterrupted routine or an orderly world is an indication of a need for safety as indicated by respondents. Life within a PRU is very complex; relationships between students, relationships between students and families, relationships between students and staff, staff and other agencies all create this complexity. However for a PRU to remain safe there must be routines and order and the successful PRU head teacher must be a quick thinker in developing strategies to engage and enable that will avoid crisis but maintain stability and order.

## **9.5 Strategic**

*A professional with a view to the future with a long term view to their planning and who understands that working with the whole person and all agencies is the way forward.*

McGregor’s (1960) X assumes employees are lazy and, if they can, employees will avoid work, workers need to be closely supervised and comprehensive systems of controls need to be in place. This theory suggest

that to keep workers on task, for tasks and objectives to be met, there will be a need for a 'long term view to planning', in order to put in place systems of control, particularly in an environment of a mass manufacturing or a shop floor in a factory that must meet productivity demands. However, the respondents from this research project had a different perspective on the need for long term view for planning. Respondents believe that for them to develop personally and professionally the PRU head teacher must see the wider world and with that information plan long term:

- *"...in the last PRU I worked in the head lived in a little PRU world...you felt ... the world you work in is tiny...now the Head I work for sees things differently..."* (1Wmc07)

Respondents felt that without that wider perspective planning for the PRU, staff and student development would be hindered:

- *"...our Head makes sure we get the same county training as the mainstream schools... able to share ideas and resources..."* (1Wme07)

Theory Y argues that when people are motivated they will be self-motivating to the aims of the organisation McGregor (1960), when the successful PRU head teacher looks outside the PRU world and encourages partnership between other professionals and organisations they are enabling staff to develop skills and imagination which lead to staff looking to take the lead in development. Maslow's (1943, 1954) '*belonging needs*' are also being met, respondents have described how they have experience a sense of belonging, *"...you feel part of a bigger team..."* (1Wme07). This sense will create a closer partnership between staff.

The ability to be strategic in thinking and planning has been identified by respondents as essential when working with students and families who attend PRUs. Respondents valued the ability to think and plan for the long term '*you have to see the bigger picture*' one team of respondents described their experiences of working with a particularly difficult student and his younger siblings:

- *“...I now understand why the head...made the decision... he knew there were two other siblings that would be coming our way and if we were seen by the family not to have been fair with this boy then the siblings would also suffer ...” (1Wmh07)*

I was a little concerned that this respondent took quite some time before they understood why a decision was made. Did this mean that the PRU head teacher felt that the staff need to be ‘told’ what to do because staff were not interested in their role, which would reflect the attitude of Theory X? Or was it that this respondent was given the reason behind why the decision was made but experiencing the result of the decision had more of an impact on the respondent, *“...but true to form two years later the twins arrived...” (1Wmh07)* This would support Theory Y, which argues how employees should be given opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and understanding.

## **9.6 Committed**

*A professional who is a ‘doer’ as well as a talker, gets the work done and is persistent in their drive to achieve success, will challenge the rights of the child and the rights of other professionals.*

This characteristic is closely linked to McGregor (1960) Theory X where he argues that its origins are with Adam and Eve when they were banished from the Garden of Eden into the world of work, where a ‘fair day’s work’ was needed (Kennedy 1991). This characteristic could be linked to this theory; a doer, someone who gets the work done:

- *“...she just does anything... she serves the dinner to the students...one day I saw her sweeping the yard ...I didn’t expect her to be prepared to ‘get her hands dirty...” (2Mmcd08)*

Being task driven would certainly result in this behaviour, doing what it took to get the job done and meet the target. Respondents provided an example of a PRU Head who did not exhibit that same ‘drive’:

- *“...in my last place the Head never really got ‘stuck in’...he gave advice but then let you get on with it...” (1Wmd07)*

This respondent presented this example as negative. Respondents were clear that they wanted a PRU head teacher who did make sure that tasks were completed. Respondents' interpreted this behaviour as the Head Teacher staying within the same 'group' as them:

- *"...I have to be honest I thought that when you get to be a Head Teacher you have a different status.....he is prepared to be part of the team...if it needs doing he says get it done..." (1Mmb07),*

This behaviour also links this characteristic to Maslow's (1943, 1954) 'belonging needs'.

However, the PRU head teacher is 'getting done what needs to be done' not because of the drive to meet productivity targets or working on 'piece work' where the harder you work the more you earn. There is a different motivation for this behaviour, the successful PRU head teacher exhibits this behaviour to makes sure that processes are correct in order to '*challenge the rights of the child and the rights of other professionals*'. Within the life of the PRU, the right of the child means having a hot meal, having a clean and safe environment to be in. However this drive to 'get done what needs to be done' is not based only in the practical, hands on behaviour. Respondents described how a PRU head teacher who has been assaulted still had the drive to make sure that the student's rights were protected.

- *"...everyone would have been supportive if she had just turned away from the problem...but no she believed that someone needed to fight the student's corner to make sure he had the best chance of successful, which she did..." (1Wmd07)*

McGregor's (1960) Theory Y assumes that people learn to accept responsibility and in the right environment will seek responsibility; it would appear that this characteristic demonstrates this assumption, the PRU head teacher exhibited '*persistence in their drive to achieve successes*' not for themselves but for the students they have responsibility for.

## **9.7 Thoughts**

I have made comparisons and established links between the characteristics identified by all sample groups and leadership and management. I have also identified feedback from respondents that supports Maslow (1943) theory that may act has one or more motivators.

I found that each of the six characteristics could be linked to management or leadership styles identified by McGregor (1960), also many of Maslow's 'needs'. I then found that I could not place one characteristic into Maslow or McGregor's theories without it also touching on the other theories being considered; this resulted in a complex view of what is perceived as the characteristics of a successful PRU head teacher.

Through analysis of all data it is clear that key stakeholders perceive a successful PRU head teacher as having six specific behaviours or characteristics within their tool kit of skills. Key stakeholders perceive that a successful PRU Head Teacher will use these behaviours in a manner that is complex and instinctive in order to successfully manage crisis as well as development. Key stakeholders perceived one characteristic as the strongest and the most important characteristic; 'challenging/demanding'. Key stakeholders were not specific about the weighting of the other characteristics only that the successful PRU head teacher must posses them.

Hunt (1991), Bennis (1989 ) and Schein (1994) are clear that to be effective in taking staff, employees or workers forward and to achieve the potential of the organisation you need a bit of a leader and a bit of a manager, but they are not clear what 'bits' they mean. I believe that I have established what the 'bits' of a successful PRU head teacher are. The characteristics of a successful PRU head teacher are demanding/challenging, pastoral, thoughtful/thinker, innovative, strategic and committed. During an annual conference organised by the National Organisation for PRUs (2008) I tested my theory. I delivered a workshop and presented my ideas to a group of delegates that I believed were a typical group of PRU head teachers. Delegates agreed with my theory

that a successful PRU head teacher must be able to use, at different times, each of these six behaviours.

- *“...I hadn’t thought about what I do but now I see it written down it makes sense...” (W1a08)*
- *“...when I think about the different roles I play with my staff, my students and with the LEA I would 100% agree... I don’t think I had all these skills at the beginning...maybe I did but they weren’t very strong characteristics...” (W1e08)*
- *“...I have to agree...when I first had my role I didn’t have what you call challenging/demanding in my armoury ...I leant very quickly that this was a skill I needed to develop...I was really struggling with staff issue...it took some time to develop the courage to challenge them and demand better quality work...” (W1b08)*

One delegate did not agree with all of the categories, *“...I don’t agree with the need to be challenging...I don’t agree with shouting and being aggressive...” (W1d08)*, I did not have to respond, others in the workshop spoke out supporting the information I had presented. *“...that’s not what is being said, being challenging or demanding has nothing to do with being aggressive this is about wanting the best and expecting the best...”(W1a08)*. After further discussion it became clear that the delegate who objected to the characteristic ‘demanding/challenging’ was not a PRU head teacher but was a deputy PRU head teacher who had been in post for some time. He was now working with a new PRU head teacher; he had not been offered the post of PRU head teacher that he had covered for two terms.

Presenting my theory of a successful PRU head teacher having six characteristics at this conference was the first time that I had the opportunity to meet with serving PRU head teachers and discuss my findings. The responses from the delegates were supportive of the theory, delegates were keen to find out more and asked for a copy of the information I was presenting. It was at this stage that I was confident that my work had something to say.



## **CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL PRU HEAD TEACHER AND CHAOS AND COMPLEXITY**

Chaos and complexity theory is the framework for my research, wearing 'chaos and complexity tinted glasses' has allowed me to reflect on the 'whole', Analysing the 'feedback' from all sample groups has enabled me to identify the behaviour of a successful PRU head teacher. What has become clear is that the behaviour of a successful PRU head teacher will not solely fit into what is recognised as Leadership Theory or Management Theory or Motivation Theory. However, the complex and instinctive combination and mix of the six characteristics identified can be explained and understood by using the 'Chaos and Complexity' theoretical framework.

Chaos and complexity is about the study of open systems and within the world of chaos and complexity are 'complex adaptive system'. This type of system displays behaviour that is different to simple stability and which is non-linear in its existence. 'Adaptive complex systems' have particular characteristics:

1. numerous elements interacting
2. organised and dynamic, emergent behaviour

(Bertuglia and Vaio 2005)

The 'numerous elements' within a PRU are the interactions that occur because of behaviours, actions or reactions to the many relationships between students and staff, students and other students, students and their carers, carers and professionals, professionals and staff, staff and the Management Committee, and so on. The organised and dynamic emergent behaviour is the complex interactions and connections between the six characteristics identified by respondents from all sample groups of this research project. This emergent behaviour will produce a successful PRU, a failing PRU, a struggling PRU and the many standards and qualities of a PRU in between success and failure.

An example of an 'adaptive complex system' demonstrating 'emergent behaviour' was created by Craig Reynolds in 1987. Reynolds (1987) created a simple computer model of flocking behaviours to demonstrate emergent behaviour. To demonstrate the emergent behaviour in a PRU I have used the principles that Reynolds' (1987) used in the model system.

To demonstrate emergent behaviour Reynolds (1987) created 'boids': a simple computer model of birds flocking, that he called 'boids'; each boid was programmed with three simple rules

1. separation: steer to avoid crowding each other
2. alignment: steer toward the average heading of other boids
3. cohesion: steer to move toward the average position of other boids

In the case of a PRU model the '*boid*' is the PRU head teacher; Reynolds (1987) gave his 'boids' three simple rules, for the 'boid' within the PRU I have proved six rules. Like the rules set by Reynolds (1987) the rules for the PRU 'adaptive complex system', can be described as actions or behaviours. Reynolds (1987) uses rules but in this case I am using behaviours and characteristics developed from data provided by respondents from all sample groups:

1. Challenging/Demanding: have high expectations; be clear about boundaries and consequences and rewards
2. Pastoral: be sensitive to the needs of staff and students; enable others to ask for help
3. Thoughtful/Thinker: analyse feedback, use feedback to formation to problem solve
4. Innovative: think creatively, and multi-task
5. Strategic: keep a long term view work with as many people as possible
6. Committed: gets the work done and persistent for the rights of the child and adults

When these rules are made available to the PRU head teachers, the rules are understood, and the PRU head teacher is able to use them appropriately, the PRU head teacher will have the emotional and physical tools to follow the

rules. I can predict that the 'emergent behaviour' of the PRU head teacher will create a successful PRU. Of course prediction is not something that is easy to fit alongside chaos and complexity theory. Prediction is linear language, whereas chaos and complexity is non-linear. What I can not predict is the behaviour of the PRU head teacher, the when or how and to what degree or mix of the rules the PRU head teacher or 'boid' will use when strange attractors appear. In this example, which differs from the Reynolds' (1987) work, an incentive is in place for the 'boid/PRU head teacher'. If the rules are not followed or the combination of rules is not used appropriately, the PRU head teacher will place their role in jeopardy as well as the security of the staff and students attending the PRU.

Reynolds (1987) in his experiment produced obstacles that mirrored the life of real birds, for example predators, the three simple rules provided were aimed at enabling the 'boid' to survive. The obstacles or 'strange attractors' that are within the PRU system include the individual complex needs of each students, the complex behaviours of each students, the interactions between student, the needs of the staff, the interactions between staff, the financial demands of provision, central legislation, local expectations etc. Feedback from respondents tell us that successful PRU head teachers face these obstacles daily and are able to continue to keep the PRU safe. Analysis of the feedback from respondents has provided the six local rules for the 'PRU system'; it is however how the PRU head teacher interprets and combines elements of the rules that will enable them to avoid the obstacles or attractors and 'strange attractors'.

Attractors and 'strange attractors' are part of the Chaos and Complexity Theory vocabulary. An 'attractor' within a PRU is student behaviour, which has boundaries, but which cannot be accurately predicted. The 'strange attractor' is the behaviour within a system that has no predictability. Within a PRU it is predictable that students have or will exhibit particular behaviours. What is not predictable is when these behaviours become 'strange attractors', for example underlying behaviour is present but has additional elements that

are not evident, the behaviour then becomes unpredictable as measures that are in place to deal with the 'attractor' have no or limited influence.

Strange attractors that occur within the PRU 'system' are vast and create great elements of surprise and difficulty for professionals in terms of management of behaviour. For example, when politely greeting a student in the morning expecting a reasonable response is acceptable. However, strange attractors can include hunger, sleep deprivation, lack of medication, mis-use of drugs or alcohol, physical or sexual abuse, bullying and much more. If the teacher has performed the act of greeting that same student in the same way many times and received a repeated response it is reasonable to expect a repeated response. The characteristics identified by respondents have provided rules for the PRU head teacher, how these rules are used and combined will enable the PRU head teacher to avoid collision with these strange attractors, as with Reynolds' (1987) and his 'boids'.

However, strange attractors occur without predication, crises can develop and the head teacher will often need to intervene or 'manage' the crisis. It is how the PRU head teacher responds to the crises, instinctively combining the six characteristics that is emergent behaviour.

A successful PRU is a head teacher who sees the obstacles to success through chaos and complexity tinted glasses. This means that the successful PRU head teacher is not blinded or hindered by the complex and chaotic interactions between for example students, staff and students and LEA and staff. The characteristics of the successful PRU head teacher provide the tools necessary to manoeuvre between the obstacles and move the PRU students, staff and all key stakeholders to success. The failing PRU has a head teacher who is rigid and linear in their thinking and responsive to the problems that the chaotic and complex life of a PRU.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN: PLACING MY WORK

*As my study reaches a close I find myself reflecting on placing my work amongst literature that reflects on PRUs. There are developments from this study for which I am confident I can claim originality, for example the theoretical framework used to shape my study, and most importantly this study offers a model of characteristics of a successful PRU head teacher. These characteristics were identified by key stakeholders as the main factor to a successful PRU. In placing my work I also considered limitations to my study. The limitations I faced, I believe, may have influenced some elements of the study but not the final shape or findings of my study.*

### 11.1 Research Ethics

*I have wondered where I should highlight the ethics issues linked to this study. Should I place it at the beginning of my study, I was not sure. However, I am now sure that this is where they should be. Considering ethics has been an important element of my study and I believe that highlighting them at this final stage of my study reflects the ongoing role they have played in my work.*

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) discuss issues surrounding ethics suggesting that ethical dilemmas are potentially wide-ranging and will be challenging to any researcher. One such challenge or dilemma is how the researcher strikes a balance between the pursuits of the 'truth' and how the subjects' rights and values, which could be easily threatened by the research, are represented? This concern was previously discussed by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) describing this dilemma as a 'costs benefits ratio'. In simple terms a researcher must strike a balance between their role as a researcher, looking for the truth and the rights and values of the

participants. This is a difficult ethical dilemma, and it cannot be just shrugged off (Aronson, Ellsworth, Carlsmith, and Gonzalez 1990).

Cohen et al (2000) suggests examining American textbooks to learn the extent to which professional researchers in the social sciences are governed by the different levels of laws and regulations. Levels include laws and regulations at federal and state statutes as well as at university level where there are 'ethics committees' that monitor research in universities and colleges and require that ethical codes are followed. All levels of researchers are affected. It is essential they stay within the codes and regulations laid down. If it is perceived that researchers have not met responsibilities laid down by the laws and regulations then legal or financial penalties can be enforced. However, Cohen et al (2000) believe that Britain has not yet travelled the road that places researchers within the strict boundaries set by laws and regulations, but suggests it may only be a question of time.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) describe teacher-researchers as moral agents with views, opinions, values and attitudes and that every study will have some level of ethical and moral dilemmas. I am a teacher-researcher and have taken seriously my role as a researcher. This study has taken its own shape but the issues of ethics have been at the forefront of my thoughts throughout the study project. The early stage of my study presented no ethical concerns. All data subject to analyses was currently in the public domain, available to the public through media libraries, the Internet and academic libraries. All the data from respondents has come about from agreement with the respondents. All asked for feedback, I agreed that I would provide feedback by delivering workshops at national conferences, attending staff meetings, through 1-2-1 discussions with them and a short written report if they wanted hard copy information. Many respondents also requested their feedback be kept confidential. I agreed that all data would be shredded at the end of the analyses of the data. When working with staff teams, a verbal contract was agreed between me, as the researcher, and all members of the team in the staff meeting that I would make notes of what was discussed but that those notes would be destroyed at the end of data analyses.

An important ethical decision was meeting with students attending PRUs and their carers. The aim of this study was to review perspectives of key stakeholder of PRUs. PRU students and their carers, I believe hold a large stake in understanding what makes a successful PRU. However the difficulties respondents may have in giving informed consent influenced the decision not to use these sample groups. Often the students, who attend PRUs, and their carers, experience literacy difficulties, others often have speech and language difficulties. I weighed up the 'costs benefits ratio' as described by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992). I did not believe that the time I had available to me enabled me to provide enough support to students or carers in making an informed decision for this study. A further example of Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) 'costs benefits ratio' is evident in my decision not to use my teaching staff in the sample group, also my decision to only use questionnaire feedback from my non teaching staff. I was keen to avoid any opportunities of influencing data, which I believe would have been the case if I had not made these decisions.

Being a part-time student with a full-time job was a limitation in terms of time I was able to commit to my study. It was often difficult to organise and agree times to meet with respondents who wanted to contribute to the research. Many of the respondents feeding data into this study worked during school terms, as I do, which caused many problems when travelling to meet with different staff teams. Finally, costs for travel and mailing out questionnaires did impact on the number of respondents I was able to work with. This was eased to some degree by accessing some sample groups whilst attending annual conferences however, making links and gathering data from sample groups working outside of PRUs was more difficult and hampered much by a full-time job and a lack of funds.

The greatest limitation to this study was the lack of literature in the study of PRUs. However, with limitation comes opportunity to add to the small library of literature which I believe this study has done. Much of the literature that does exist is government documents, which does not reflect practitioner views but is generally steered by the politics of the day. The other bulk of literature

reviewed is produced by Estyn and Ofsted inspection teams. This literature did provide a view of what makes a successful PRU, however, evidence gathered by inspection teams did not allow for the perceptions of key stakeholders to influence findings. Evidence sought by inspections teams was more 'concrete'. Hard evidence was collected, for example, exam results, number of exclusions and written policies in place. Whereas, this study has originality in that it has looked for qualitative evidence, perceptions, personal experiences, emotions.

### **11.2 Originality**

In placing my work it is essential to identify originality in my work. I believe that the aim of this study is original, asking key stakeholders their perception of what makes a successful PRU. Of course Inspection teams look at the performance of PRUs using an inspection framework. However, I believe that this study is original in terms of the depth of numbers of respondents who have contributed and provided data for this research. In my search for literature about PRUs I found one study that asked key stakeholders about their perception. Garner (2000) carried out a small study discussing perceptions of pupils, teachers, parents and education officers on the role of PRUs. The study was small, reflecting on the perceptions of a small sample, the study did however, contribute to this study. My own study did not include students or carers. I would therefore suggest that further work needs to be carried out. A more in-depth study of the perceptions of students attending PRUs and their carers about what makes a successful PRU will add to the depth of literature in this specialist area of education.

Another original aspect to this study is the use of chaos and complexity as the theoretical framework. Chaos and complexity theory is generally defined or understood as the study of forever-changing complex systems. Seeing the world through chaos and complexity tinted glasses it is accepted that unpredictable results will occur, a principle of Glieck (1987) is that 'small-scale changes in initial conditions can produce unpredictable changes in outcome'. The most common example of this is the 'butterfly effect', the flapping of a



butterfly's wings in China could cause tiny atmospheric changes which over a period of time could affect weather patterns elsewhere in the world.

This behaviour is seen many times when supporting PRU students (an example discussed on page 80), for example, what seems like small changes to the physical appearance results in unpredictable behaviours from a PRU student. It is these unpredictable behaviours from individual students that create behaviour patterns.

Complex and chaotic systems appear to be random, but in reality they are not. Beneath the random behaviour we see behaviour patterns occur. Generally when patterns are in existence it may be acceptable to see behaviours become predictable. The word 'pattern' to most people suggests a sense of uniformity, a sequence of events; we know what something will look like if we follow the pattern. Because of this many people would nail down this pattern as concrete. However, what I am saying is that these behaviours are not concrete but cause and effects.

Within the PRU, the complexity of the needs and the difficulties of students can result in very unpredictable behaviours. However, the behaviours although unpredictable do have patterns; the patterns though are not concrete and therefore not predictable. The behaviour has a pattern in that individual students will exhibit patterns of behaviours which are very specific to them. For example, one student will hit out with a clinched fist, is verbally abusive using specific language, will pace about, will attack if you have your back to them, will spit and will scream. When a student becomes distressed and out of control these are the behaviours that he or she will exhibit. It is not possible to predict in what order these behaviours will happen or the severity of them. There is however, a pattern to them in that these behaviours will make up the body of the reaction or incident. Another student may not use a clinched fist, will not spit, will not attack from behind but will slap, will bite and will be verbally abusive. Again there is a clear pattern to the behaviour presented but the order in which these behaviours are used is not predictable.

Recognising a PRU as a complex and chaotic system I have developed my own strategies for supporting staff and students. Understanding that beneath what appears to be random behaviour there are behaviour patterns, has enabled me to design 'Reactive Plans' (appendix VI). I have designed the Reactive Plans as a tool for staff in preparing themselves for the unpredictable behaviour that will and does occur in individual students within the PRU. The Reactive Plan is designed to be a working document. With the word 'Plan' in the title this may suggest a linear approach, predictability and therefore not fitting into the world of chaos and complexity. However, the word 'Reactive' suggests a response, advice of how to react when the behaviour has occurred. To be used effectively it must be reviewed regularly. When it is reviewed, information may be added or changed, because what we expected to happen did not happen and behaviours we had not seen previously are now present. Also how we responded to behaviour did not influence the student in the way we expected, but may have caused the behaviour to escalate. When a student is new to the PRU it must be reviewed weekly or after any incident that the student may have been involved in or witnessed. As the student becomes more settled the period of time between reviewing will increase, but not any longer than each half term. The initial Reactive Plan is created in partnership with the student, the carers and any other agencies that support the student and the family; this is carried out as part of induction meetings.

The plan is short but very specific. It identifies any specific difficulties the student may experience, for example, statement of Special Needs, dyslexia, speech and language difficulties, ADHD, heroin user etc. The plan has four areas:

- triggers – antecedents that can 'cause' behaviours
- cues – changes in the student that tells us that behaviours could be changing
- behaviours – what behaviour the student may exhibit
- behaviour management – actions that staff should take to try to de-escalate behaviour and keep student and others staff safe

I have introduced the use of the Reactive Plan as a high status tool. The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) has for some time been a lead document when supporting students with learning difficulties and behaviour difficulties in education. I have placed this Reactive Plan at the same level of importance for assessment, monitoring and planning as the IEP. There are clear procedures to using Reactive Plans, for example they are not filed away in student files but are kept separately in a file that houses all student Reactive Plans. Plans are read and initialled by all new staff and by all staff when the Plan has been reviewed post an incident or review date. This process is a good example of the use of the 'feed back loops' described in chaos and complexity theory.

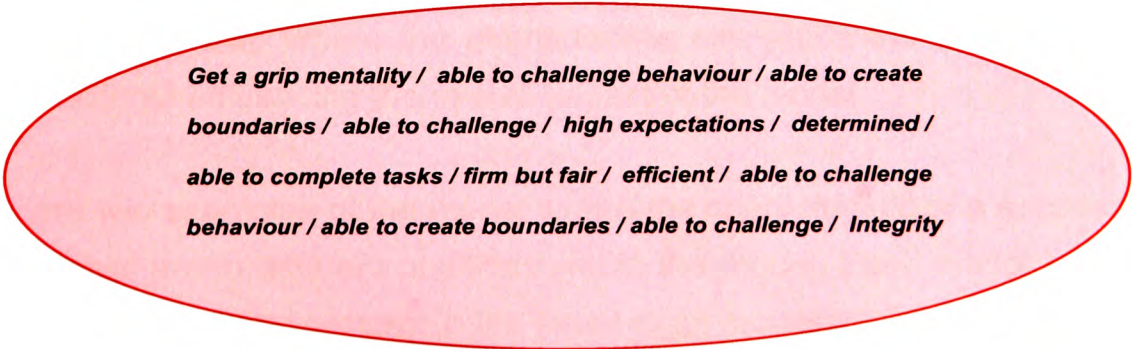
Creating the Reactive Plans and attaching staff procedures to the Plans has changed staff perception of student behaviour. Their approach is more reflective in managing difficult situations and staff are more open to improving their own knowledge and skills. I have been contacted by professionals from two other counties who were looking to improve behaviour management in their primary and secondary PRUs. I worked with the Head Teachers of each PRU and introduced Reactive Plans in the PRUs. Feedback from both PRUs concurs with my own experiences with staff. Both Head Teachers report that behaviour has improved, staff are more proactive and reflective in their support of students and there is an improved relationship between staff and students. I believe that the introduction of Reactive Plans will help behaviour management in PRUs, however, the Reactive Plans can only be effective if staff have a working knowledge of chaos and complexity theory and Glieck (1987) principles.

The key stakeholders are clear that one factor is essential to a successful PRU, that factor is the PRU head teacher. Key stakeholders are also clear that the head teacher is also the main factor of a failing PRU. This study has produced what a key stakeholder describes as the characteristics of a successful PRU head teacher.

The model of a successful PRU head teacher created as part of this study is presented on page 150. However the initial presentation of the model looks flat and suggests a lifeless model. In reality the model is responsive and dynamic. This model differs from Maslow and McGregor's models, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model is what it says, a hierarchy. Maslow talks about high level needs and low level needs. McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y are presented as two separate models of behaviour, each model consisting of one dimension. The model of a successful PRU head teacher is made up of six characteristics; within each characteristic are specific descriptors. How the successful head teacher combines the characteristics to respond to events or situations is also a system. It becomes a complex and chaotic system because of the complex combination and interaction that happens when the successful head teacher uses the six characteristics to respond to events, incidents, situations and crisis with the PRU. A pattern emerges; again I believe that the pattern is not concrete but cause and effect. Each event that the head teacher deals with will need different approaches so the pattern will change. There will be similarity in the shape of the pattern i.e. there will always be six characteristics available to address events appropriately. However, where the event or incident sits within the pattern will alter. For example, the events may be serious enough that the head teacher must focus all of the characteristics on the event to address the demands of the event or incident; the model will then engage all the characteristics.

The diagram below demonstrates the first characteristic of the model more appropriately, it gives shape and by using colour I hope the diagram suggests some depth or body to the model.

**Diagram 2: Demanding / Challenging**



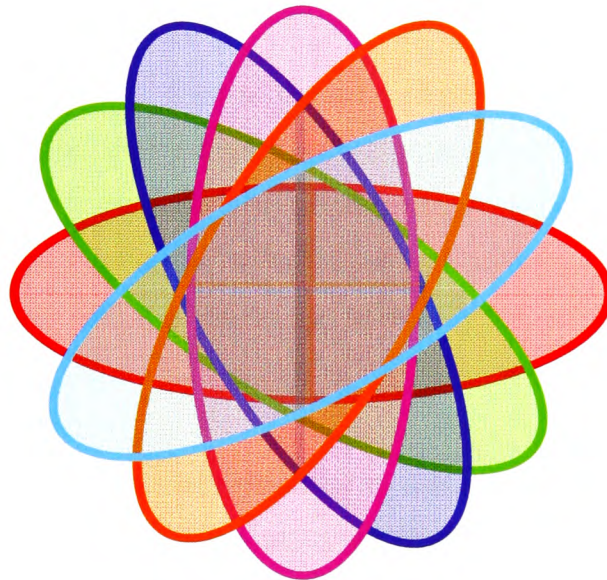
*Get a grip mentality / able to challenge behaviour / able to create boundaries / able to challenge / high expectations / determined / able to complete tasks / firm but fair / efficient / able to challenge behaviour / able to create boundaries / able to challenge / Integrity*



This second diagram shows the whole model, with each of the six characteristics within the model.

I have used colour in my diagrams to represent the different characteristics; the shape and size used to represent each of the characteristics within this model are identical. This model represents how a successful PRU head teacher has access to all six characteristics, with all the descriptors of each characteristic available to them when dealing with an incident or event. The 'pattern' that is created by the model suggests movement and a dynamic quality.

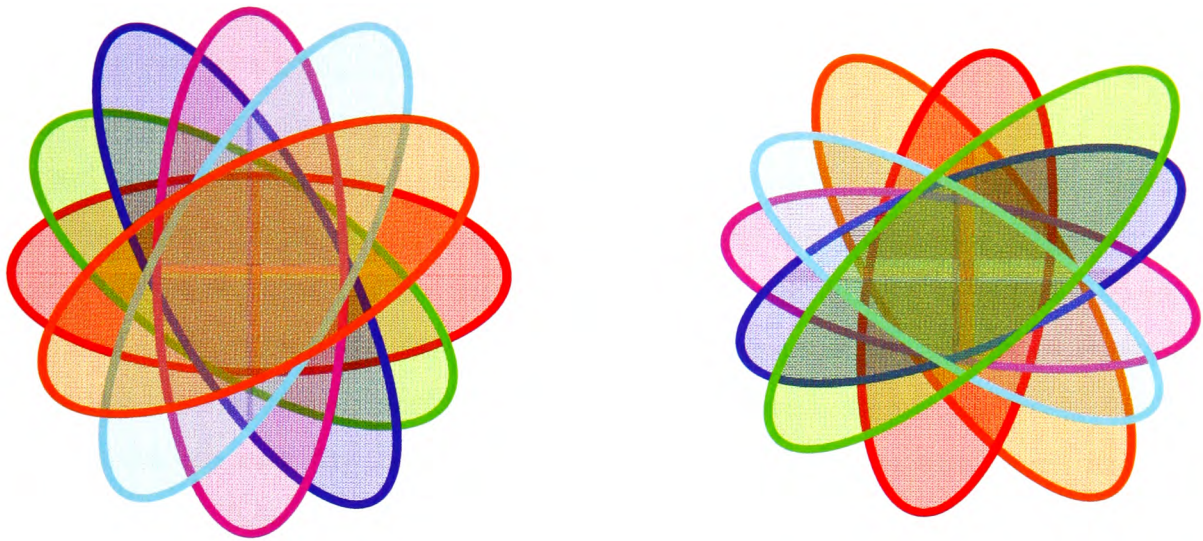
### **Diagram 3: Successful PRU Head Teacher**



Again I have used colour to present the model, however, I have not attached a particular colour to a particular characteristic, for example, I have not decided to present the pastoral characteristic as red or the strategic characteristic as pink. However, I am suggesting that each characteristic has its own identity, also where the characteristic sits within the model can be different without influencing the overall impact of the model.

Below are two examples of the model where the characteristic of a successful head teacher are in different positions within the model. Each model has the same ability to respond or react in the event of an incident.

**Diagram 4: Successful PRU Head Teacher: characteristics in different positions**



What I am establishing with these visual presentations is that there is a pattern. Within the model, there are six characteristics. However the pattern can and will differ, it is therefore not possible to predict accurately how the pattern will look, it is however, predictable that the pattern will contain particular elements but not the order or intensity of what element is being used.

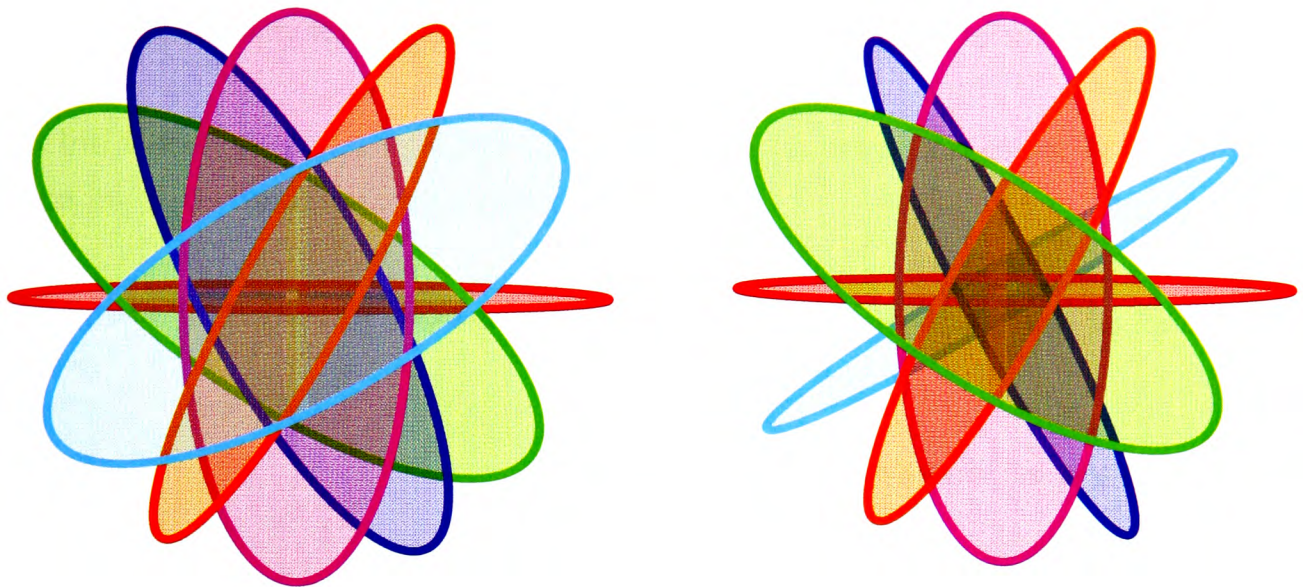
The two diagrams above are examples of a successful PRU head teacher's model. The model of a PRU head teacher that is less successful is again unpredictable. For example, a PRU head teacher may not have much 'challenging or demanding' or 'thoughtful/thinker' behaviour available to them, this may be because of lack of training or understanding. It is also possible that a successful PRU head teacher will at times, find them self unable to approach an incident or event with every behaviour within each of the characteristics available to them. Circumstances that we work and live in will and do influence the ability of a PRU head teacher to access all six characteristics in depth.

For example a number of years ago I broke my ankle badly three weeks before an Estyn inspection. I was transported into school twice a week to

oversee preparation for the inspection as well as being there to support staff who had taken over some of my daily duties as a PRU head teacher. Within a short time I was sensitive to the changes in my approach and ability to deal with some incidents and events effectively. For example, on one occasion, when I was not in school, staff struggled with a student in school. Staff had tried a number of strategies but the student was still unsettled, I was contacted at home and the student was given the phone to speak to me. Very quickly the student was calmed and reassured and the behaviour changed, I was able to follow that up on the next day I was in school. This incident demonstrates my continued ability to have high expectations of the students, to challenge the behaviour and to maintain boundaries within the school. I felt I was still able to use my 'demanding/challenging' characteristic' but I found myself unable to fully use my pastoral characteristic. After reflection on the incident, I did manage to challenge the student but at a cost, I was overly critical with staff, I set in place consequences for staff that were not fair. I was not effectively using my 'pastoral' characteristic. I was not calm when the student came off the phone, I was frustrated with being contacted by staff, I did not listen well nor was I patient or emphatic. I was however, in pain and feeling unwell, I recognise that this is not an excuse for my behaviour but because of my emotional state I did not have all of the six characteristics available to me in dealing with the incident – my model changed shape. I returned to work the next day after reflecting on my actions and met with the staff early, I focused my approach to staff on this occasion using my 'pastoral' and 'thoughtful/thinker' characteristics. I apologised to staff for not being sensitive to their needs when they were attempting to deal with the student, I negotiated ways in how they could better manage a similar situation and also how I could manage it better to support them. We talked about further training and support they felt they needed to manage situations on the days I was not physically at school. I was open about why I reacted in the way I did to staff and took responsibility for my behaviour. There was a positive outcome. Staff also took responsibility for their management of the incident, they felt that they could have managed the situation better and with the support I put in they became more confident themselves in dealing with future incidents.



**Diagram 5: PRU Head Teachers with fewer skills available to them**



Another element of unpredictability of the model is the position it takes in approaching an incident or event. For example, when approaching an incident it is impossible to use all characteristics and all behaviours at one time. This would create further chaos, crisis, misunderstanding and confusion. As you receive information, you see something, you hear something you read something, about an incident or event there is always an unconscious, if you have to react quickly, or conscious, if you have more time to react, decision on how to approach the incident or event. As this happens we are deciding what characteristic to lead with, strategic, committed, demanding/challenging, pastoral, thoughtful/thinker or innovative.

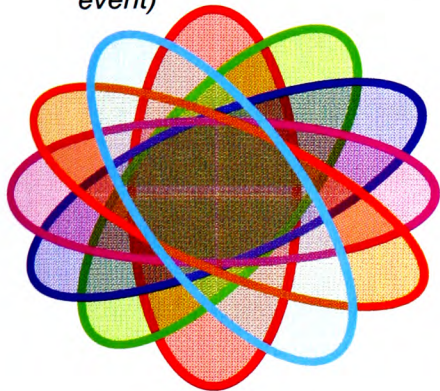
When I have seen aggressive physical contact between students the first response is to challenge the behaviour, set boundaries. In this case I lead with challenging/demanding. However, immediately I combine other characteristics with challenging/demanding, for example, pastoral and possibly innovative. I would be calm, would be listening, gathering information from students and staff, caring for those that were upset and or physically hurt as well as thinking quickly to de-escalate the aggression and tension within the environment. As the event de-escalates I would also access other characteristics as and when appropriate. It may be necessary to



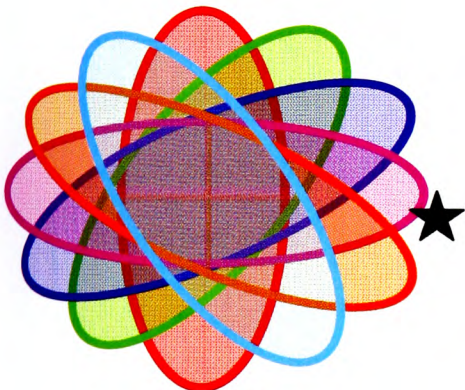
manage meetings with parents and support negotiation to move forward, or problem solve for the parents and students and find ways they can learn to take responsibility for their actions and learn new strategies to avoid conflict.

In the following diagram I have used a **star** to represent an event or incident that the PRU head teacher must react to.

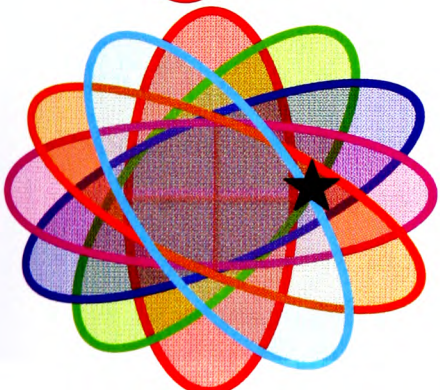
**Diagram 6: How the model reacts to events** *(the star represents an incident/event)*



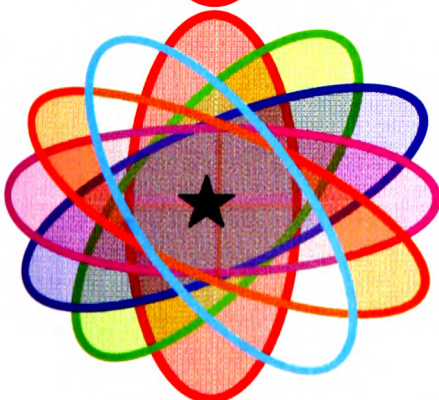
*Diagram 4a- the event before the head teacher becomes involved*



*Diagram 4b – the head teacher leads with a specific characteristic*



*Diagram 4c – the head teacher combines other characteristics to address the issues that have arisen from the event*



*Diagram 4d – the head teacher combines all characteristics to address the issues that have arisen from the event*

*At the start of this study developing a model of characteristics of a successful PRU head teacher was not part of the 'plan'. I set off wanting to know why some PRUs were more successful than others and how I could learn from others how we could improve and move forward. Our PRU was already identified as a successful PRU but being ambitious for myself, my staff and my students I keep looking. Accommodation was highlighted as a concern in our inspection report, so that is where I placed my energy. Setting off on the road of research I had the idea that improved accommodation would be a main factor. I believed that if I had better accommodation for teaching and learning in my PRU then the curriculum would be improved, student achievement would improve, student and staff self esteem would improve and we would be an even more successful PRU. What I find is that my first pages and ideas of my research do not resemble my final pages of my research. I had no idea that identifying characteristics of a PRU head teacher would be my contribution to this area of education. Of course this is a further example of chaos and complexity theory, and its non-linear approach.*

As a result of this study, opportunities have been created to challenge my model. During the 2008 national conference for National Organisation for PRUs I delivered a workshop presenting the model (appendix V). The workshop was attended by PRU head teachers and one PRU deputy head teacher. Delegates in the workshop supported the model:

- "...I hadn't thought about what I do but now I see it written down it makes sense..." (W1a08)
- "...when I think about the different roles I play with my staff, my students and with the LEA I would 100% agree..." (W1e08)

However, the conference could have been described as being amongst 'friendly fire'. Some of the delegates had been at my first workshop in 2006

and other at my second workshop in 2007. To some degree delegates had a vested interest in what I was presenting, they had contributed to the findings.

However, to give further weight to this model further study should take place. This study looked at PRUs, subsequently the model created represents a PRU head teacher. An important step would be to ask if this model also represent a successful primary school head teacher or successful secondary school head. To do this the researcher will need to understand the differences between the roles of a PRU head teacher and primary or secondary head teacher and of course what key stakeholders perceive what makes a primary or secondary school successful.

Of course this is not the only area that this model should be compared against. I believe that much of the life within the PRU for the head teacher is about managing crisis and the characteristic identified are essential in managing that crisis. However, in reality a PRU is not the only place in our world where crises occurs, and of course there are different types of crises.

I made contact with two professionals that at different times face different types of crisis. I asked a senior NHS nurse working in an accident and emergency (A&E) department of a large hospital and a senior practitioner working in a forensic prison hospital unit to read my work on the model of a successful PRU head teacher, and give me feedback. Both of these contacts are from a medical background. The choice for using these professionals was easy, I have links with both of these professions and so they became a convenient sample group.

Both appeared to be interested in the model. The A&E nurse explained that the consultant she works with, who has overall responsibility for the emergency department, exhibited some of the characteristic within the model. She described clearly how the consultant demonstrated behaviours from the Pastoral, Innovative and Thoughtful/thinker characteristics in the model (7m09a). I asked if there were any examples from the three other

characteristics in the model. She did not think there were sufficient examples to say that each of the characteristics in the model matched that of the consultant (709a). The senior practitioner from the forensic prison hospital believed that some of the characteristics from the successful PRU head teacher model did describe the Ward Manager, but not all. This respondent identified the characteristics that clearly described the Ward Manager as Demanding/challenging and thoughtful/thinker (7m09b). The respondent was clear

- *“...with staff you can see examples of the pastoral characteristics...but it is not so clear with the inmates...”* (7m09b)

I asked if they thought there was a reason for this.

- *“...we are not working with people you can always trust so we always have to make sure there is a clear line in our relationships...it is a tricky line...”* (7m09b)

I asked both respondents about examples of behaviour in the Strategic and Committed characteristics.

- *“...may be, but we work in a very hierarchical environment...you are expected to use your initiative but not step outside your role...that applies to all roles within the department...”* (7m09a)

This feedback is very limited and the two people I made contact with represent a very small sample of professionals or even professions in our working world. However, I found the feedback interesting in that some of the characteristics could apparently be linked to senior staff in this medical environment. However, the hierarchical environment may suggest that individuals in these roles are constrained, even held back or simply not enabled to grow to their full potential. Of course this is only reflection and hierarchical working environments are developed for a reason. It is not my intention to ask what these reasons are, but what this feedback may suggest is that the role of the PRU Head Teacher has more scope for an individual's development. The expectations, from the staff and the hierarchy, on the PRU head teacher appear greater.

Very recently, I attended a conference (SEBDA Annual National Conference, Bristol, March 09) and sat in on a small workshop. The workshop was led by Angela Neustatter. The workshop was called 'learning to value yourself'. The workshop was an introduction to her work with young offenders and her book 'Locked in-Locked out' (2002). The workshop was full of very experienced professionals, people who had long careers working with the most difficult students. It was not long before the workshop leader felt out her depth. She had not expected to be speaking to 'seasoned professionals'. However, what did come from the workshop was a discussion that triggered a possible link to the model created in this study. Neustatter (2009) talked about the youth offending institutes (YOI) and secure units she visited whilst collating information for her book. She talked about her disappointment in what she had seen. She felt that little was on offer for the young offenders. She did however talk, with great enthusiasm, about two projects she saw in the YOIs. *"...having seen so little provision of any quality I was inspired with what I saw..."* (Neustatter 2009). We were told very little about the content of the projects, but much about the leaders. She described the energy, commitment and determination of the project leaders to make the offenders achieve success. I asked what she saw as different about these two projects from the other provision she had visited in the YOIs. She said that the drive of the project leaders was different. I asked if she thought then that the project was successful or if the project leaders were successful. *"...I'm not sure how to answer that...I hadn't thought about it that way..."* (Neustatter 2009)

The two questions I asked brought energy to the workshop and discussion about individual experiences of people who made a difference took off. One delegate, from Guernsey, talked about the prison on Guernsey. *"...we only have one prison...everyone is in the same prison...young offenders, males and women...all under the same roof..."* (CW09a) I was among the many that wanted to know more. *"...we have a governor like no other...somehow he does things that I have never seen done before..."* (CW09a)

I have moved toward the idea that the PRU head teacher model may not match the characteristics of professionals who work under tight constraints

such as a hierarchical environment. However, I do believe that this model could be used or tested against leaders in other chaotic and complex environments, for example prison governors.

The two projects discussed by Neustatter (2009) were led by individuals who did something different, although she was not sure what it was. The governor of the prison in Guernsey was doing something different, “...*somehow he does things that I have never seen done before...*” (CW09a) I believe there are commonalities with a PRU. The environment they work in is chaotic and complex and there are some similarities in the client grouping terms of their needs both learning and emotional.

I suggest that what this very limited feedback may suggest is that the successful PRU head teacher model, I have put forward in this study, may be a good model of characteristics for leading practitioners in the management of change in chaotic and complex environments, where crisis is only inches or minutes away. Environments where there are children, young people and adults with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

I believe that there needs to be further research about what is happening in PRUs (in Wales and the newly named Short Stay Schools in England) in order to extend the limited pool of literature about this special education provision. Any studies are essential to keep this area of education in the minds of educationalists. A current study that will greatly contribute to this area of education has been commissioned by DfES. The survey is a 3 year longitudinal study; the study asks ‘What happens to pupils excluded from Pupil Referral Units or Special Schools for pupils with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties?’ The Scottish Centre for Research at University of Glasgow are leading the study, an interim report will be published in late 2009.

Recent developments in Wales and England (National Behaviour and Attendance Review (NBAR) 2008, Back on Track 2008) are putting in place strategies for reviewing issues linked to PRUs, for example funding issues of PRUs (NBAR 2008) and the re-naming of the PRU. I would hope that those

involved in reviews reflect on all the literature from this area of education, including this study. However, there are signs that those outside of the work place are not reflecting on the history of this difficult area of education.

Ed Balls, Secretary of State for School, Children and Families says the term pupil referral unit is “...*an outdated and unhelpful label...*” that there are plans to change the name and this will be reflected “...*in legislations to signal our commitment to change in this sector...*” (Lipsett 2008). The new ‘Short Stay School’ is to set a curriculum that will enable young people, outside of mainstream schools, to leave school with basic skills. The new schools will be run as groups of businesses, where young people will be “...workers as much as students...” (Lipsett 2008). These new schools are planned to start sometime in 2009. Higginbotham (2003) described how as a result of the 1834 Act schooling should continue the three ‘Rs’ and instruction in skills that made children and young people fit for service (page9).

The role of the PRU in Wales and the newly named Short Stay School in England continues to change. Children and young people who struggle to stay within the norms of the expectations of mainstream education will continue to need a ‘school’, the PRU and Short Stay School will offer this provision.

### **11.3 What Next?**

‘What next’ actions from this study are potentially wide ranging. However, for the model to represent a fuller population of PRU key stakeholders I must review ethical issues and plan appropriate opportunities to offer carers and students ‘to have their say’. Students and carers must have the opportunity to put forward their perceptions of what makes a successful PRU. I believe that without the views, ideas and perceptions of these key players, the PRU the model is not fully complete.

Currently there are no specific training opportunities for head teachers of PRUs or Short Stay Schools. The role is unique and training, as clearly identified by key stakeholders as well as inspection teams is an issue. I

believe that this model could become a tool for developing appropriate training material to support professionals in this area of education.

Another aspect I would like to further develop is the role of chaos and complexity in training. During this study I have continued to provide training and guidance to newly qualified staff from education and social services. I have begun to use chaos and complexity theory in my training as an aid to developing understanding of behaviours exhibited by children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. I would like to look further at how this theory can be used as a teaching aid and to produce resources to be used in this potential training area.

I would like to test my model against leading practitioners working in environments that manage children and young people as well as adults' who lives and behaviours are chaotic and complex. This would include professionals from a variety of settings, including but not only education. I believe that there is a link between the children and young people placed in PRUs and children and young people who previously attended Therapeutic Schools. The numbers of these schools has dropped but the child and young person with complex needs continues to exist. I believe there are some similarities in the complex needs of some children and young people being placed in some PRUs and those placed in therapeutic school, do the heads exhibit similar characteristics and behaviours?

Also Neustatter (2002) looked at the experiences of young offenders in prison and other secure establishments. She talked about some practitioners working with this group of young people as 'different', their approach was different, how they did things was different, they were successful with this group of young people. Neustatter (2002) looked at the experiences of the young people, I would like to look at the behaviours of the practitioners who work with this group of young people. Do successful practitioners working with this group of young people exhibit behaviours found in the model of a successful PRU head teacher?



I would like to test my model of a successful PRU head teacher against other leadership and management models, for example Trait Theory, Transactional Theory and Transformational Theory. Can this model contribute to this area of research? Hunt (1991), Bennis (1989 ) and Schein (1994) are clear that to be effective in taking staff, employees or workers forward and to achieve the potential of the organisation you need a bit of both. I believe that the model that I am presenting is clearer. This model stresses that to be a successful PRU head teacher *'this is what you need'*. It crosses the boundaries of leadership and management, it does not leave the reader trying to guess what bits of both they need.

The strongest 'what next' action I have however is the drive to return to viewing my world through chaos and complexity tinted glasses. This theoretical framework has helped me develop my knowledge and understanding of my work with children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It has also developed my skills in working with and supporting staff. However, I believe there is more to learn. As a step forward from this study I would like to look closer at the relationship between this theory and our actions, reactions and behaviours in social, antisocial, learning and working environments.

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## **Appendices**

### ***Emergent Leadership – example***

Assigned leadership occurs when a person is appointed to the role, someone officially recognised and placed in the post. 'Emergent leadership' results when a person who over time is perceived by others as the most influential member of the team or organisation and therefore gains their support. This person acquires leadership through others in the team who accept that persons' behaviour (Northhouse 2004).

Stein, Hoffman, Cooley and Pearse (1979) suggest that 'emergent leadership' passes through 3 stages

1. orientation
2. conflict
3. emergence

The 'orientation' stage is when a person from the team announces their candidacies to themselves and starts orientating themselves around others. The 'conflict stage' is when those who have announced their candidacies 'battle it out' and the 'emergence stage' when others in the groups accept or 'subordinate themselves' to the leader (Curtin 2004). Stein et al (1979) designed their 'model of emergent leadership' by incorporating Hollander's theory of 'idiosyncrasy credit'. Hollander (1958) theorised that 'emergent leaders' take on this role after they have earned 'credits' from other members of the team or group. Credits are earned when the person meets the groups' expectations. In this process the person influences group behaviour and in turn has their influence accepted by those in the group. A clear example of emergent leadership can be seen in the jury system. When a jury comes together a 'foreman' is not identified by an outside body, for example the solicitors or barristers, a juror must volunteer and then be supported by his or her peers, actions behind the closed doors of the jury result in an 'emergent leader' taking the role of the 'foreperson'.

In my own life I can easily link experience to Stein et al (1979) and Hollander (1958) three stages process of 'emergent leadership' theory. For example some years ago I lived in the South of England and as a keen hockey player I looked for a local ladies team to join. The closest ladies team was over 15 miles away, but there was a well established men's' hockey club within 2 miles of my home. I spoke to the Chairman and discovered that wives, partners, sisters and friends of the male players were very keen to start up a ladies side at the club.

A date was arranged for a meeting for all interested to attend to discuss how we could create this 'new team'. After our second meeting nothing had been decided, the meetings felt more like a gathering of women wanting to play hockey but with no ideas of how to move forward. Some of the women knew one another through their partners and spent the two meetings sitting together (I will call Group A); they were not making much effort to mix with those of us who were new to the area. Most of us at the meeting were new to the area as well as not knowing each other. There was no clear 'bond' between us and in effect there were two clear groups, we became Group B. I was very keen to play hockey the next season so wanted to move things forward. During the



third meeting I unconsciously moved in to what Stein et al (1979) and Hollander (1958) described as 'stage one - orientation'. I made every effort to get to know everyone's name, learnt about their backgrounds and took every opportunity to get everyone talking to everyone. As I began to get people talking another woman from Group A changed her behaviour. She appeared to move outside Group A and began to engage with Group B. On reflection it was clear that we were both behaving differently in each of our groups – gaining credits from those at the meetings. During this third meeting it was agreed that we needed someone to volunteer to make contact with the area league to find out about the constitution of creating a new team and what we should do in order to join the area league. One of the women from Group A group recommended the woman who, like me, was moving herself forward in the group. Before anyone could respond to that I volunteered myself saying that I had time available and would enjoy making contact with everyone as it would give me an opportunity to get to know the area and the people. Women from Group B immediately supported me, they seemed pleased that 'one of them' would be doing something to move things forward – I had earned enough of their credits. A date to meet again was in place and a list of agreed tasks for me to complete were in place.

However this was the beginning of stage two – conflict. Within the week I had contacted the local League Secretary to gather information. At the next meeting I arrived with lots of information. Before the meeting could get underway some members of Group A asked to speak, they informed us that they felt we would not be ready to move forward creating the new team. They informed us that they had spoken to the Club Chairman and put forward to him that there may not be enough women to create a team this year but that they had put together a list of things for them to do during next season to make sure everything was organised and in place for the following season. They also informed the meeting that some of them had only just given birth and did not feel they would be fit enough to play this season. There were many looks of disappointment in the room. I then stood up and asked people if they wanted me to feed back to them on what I had found out. I started by asking those who had been part of the first presentation "...has the Club Chairman agreed that we should wait another full season..?" To my delight the Club Chairman was sitting at the bar and said "...no, I haven't agreed to anything, I was approached by a group of women who I thought was speaking on behalf of you all...I had hoped that you would be ready to join the league earlier..." I went on to tell the room that not only had I completed all the paper work for the league, I has also spoken to a number of teams who were looking for 'friendly matches' as they too were looking to put more sides into the league. Finally I informed everyone that I had been contacted by five women looking to move clubs and play nearer to home. As the information settled I asked if people wanted to vote for moving forward from the information I had gathered or should we wait another season if some felt that at this stage they may not be fit enough to start training yet, I also reminded them of the new ladies wanting to join us. We were moving into 'stage three' - emergence. The vote took place and it was agreed that we would move forward based on the information I had gathered. Not everyone was happy but we moved forward. I captained the team for the next five years until I moved to South Yorkshire. I had a wonderful period of hockey and was able to lead the team

to win the league in the last year of my playing in the South of England. Of course 'emergent leadership' can develop or occur in a variety of situations, the example I have provided is one that links to the sporting world, which develops through the three stages identified by Stein et al (1979). On reflection the sporting example may appear more gladiatorial than would fit the experiences within a PRU.

My hockey experience is of course a very simple example of 'emergent leadership'. However, another example with much more weight is Germany and Hitler's rise to power between the period of the Great War and the subsequent Second World War. After the Great War Germany faced many problems that came with defeat, the country was lost needing direction and a new sense of pride. Any organisation with such problems, whether they are a small business, a large organisation and in this example a country, will provide opportunities for an 'emergent leader' to appear, this can result in very positive leadership or in the case of Hitler not so. What is clear however from the respondents of this study is that emergent leadership can happen in a PRU. Without the support of the Management Committee respondents believe the person in that role can add to the difficulties already present in a PRU. For example, a divide between staff will occur and this can only cause further difficulties for the students.

### Referencing Code

Below is an example of the grid used to code data collected. I have used:

- numbers 1-6 to represent the sample group data was collected from  
e.g. = PRU heads
- a letter to represent how the data was collected e.g. m = 1-2-1 meeting
- the year the data was collected e.g. 06 - 2006
- a lower case letter to represent the which person from that sample group  
e.g. d = the fourth respondent recorded form that sample group

I have kept a strict format in that each of the sample groups has the same recording pattern. For example each group has five ways of recording data collected. There are only two deviations from this:

- CW = conference workshop that I attended
- HMI = Her Majesty's Inspector.

PRU Heads							
1-2-1 meeting 1m06	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
staff meeting 1M06	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
Questionnaire/con 1qc06	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
Questionnaire/post 1qp06	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
Telephone 1t06	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
PRU Teaching Staff							
1-2-1 meeting 2m06	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
Professional Key Stakeholders e.g. YOT, SS and Management Committee							
1-2-1 meeting 3m06	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
PRU Non Teaching Staff							
1-2-1 meeting 4m06	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
LEA Officers e.g. EPs, Advisors, Behaviour Support Teachers							
1-2-1 meeting 5m06	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
Mainstream Staff including head teachers, SENCOs and class teachers							
1-2-1 meeting 6m06	a	b	c	d	e	f	g

## Sample Information

PRU Heads	PRU Teaching Staff	Key Stakeholders	PRU Non Teaching Staff	LEA Officers	Mainstream Teachers
54 PRU Heads targeted 50 – England 4 – Wales 35 Heads at 06 PRU in conference packs – avoided too many from same county 15 Heads from PRU.Org membership database – no more than 1 per county – random with county 4 questionnaires sent as result of snowballing 43 Secondary PRU Heads 12 Primary PRU 54 targeted / 45 responses	63 English PRUs targeted 49 in PRU.Org 06 conference packs 25 PRU teaching staff from PRU.Org membership database – no more than 1 per county – random with county – 2 sent to each PRU 24 questionnaires to 12 Welsh PRUs targeted 6 questionnaires sent as result of snowballing – England 92 targeted / 48 responses	Youth Offending Service Social Services Management Committee Members Youth Services CHAMS 38 individual post targeted 35 – Wales 3 – England 38 targeted / 16 responses	25 PRU targeted 20 Welsh PRU staff targeted 5 English PRU staff targeted 25 Targeted / 10 responses	Educational Psychologists Advisory Staff Behaviour Support Managers Inclusion Managers 27 individual posts targeted 27 targeted / 6 responses	30 mainstream teachers targeted 21 Secondary Schools 9 Primary schools 30 targeted / 3 responses

### **PERCEPTIONS OF PRUS**

I am currently researching what makes a successful PRU. I am asking all PRU key stakeholders their perceptions of successful PRUs. Your participation in completing this questionnaire is greatly appreciated; your responses will form a major part of my research. Findings from data collected at this conference will be made available to all respondents; I have agreed to deliver a workshop, in the 2007 annual conference to present interim findings. If you would like further information about this research I can be contacted at [welsh@prus.org.uk](mailto:welsh@prus.org.uk)

Thank you in advance

What is your current role?

How long have you worked in this post?

Experiences of working in or supporting students and staff in PRUs?

From your experience what differences, if any, are there between the different Key Stage PRUs?

From your experience what do you perceive as a successful PRU?

From your own experiences and your perception what do you think hinders the success of a PRU?

From your experiences what do you think needs to be in place to create a successful PRU? *(list as many things as you think necessary)*

From your list what do you perceive as the most important element that enables a successful PRU, and why?

What three management characteristics do you think a PRU Head should have?

Any other comments

*I would like to speak to a sample of respondents to take part in a more in-depth interview. This could be carried out on the telephone or face to face. If you are willing to take part please provide contact details. These interviews are confidential and participants will remain anonymous*

I am prepared to take part in an interview, here are my contact details.

Name .....Telephone .....

Best times to contact me are .....



PRU National Conference 2007  
Feedback Workshop

EMERGENT BEHAVIOURS WITHIN SUCCESSFUL AND  
FAILING PRUS

*AM Kitchener*  
*Qualitative Study*

aprilmayk@btinternet.com

**AIMS**

To share interim findings with key stakeholders

To gather additional information (LEA Officer response!)

**Activities**

As we view slides there will be tasks to complete!

aprilmayk@btinternet.com

***Looking at key stakeholder perspectives***

Sample groups included

- PRU Heads
- PRU teaching Staff
- PRU Non teaching staff
- YOT
- SS
- LEA Officers
- Mainstream teaching Staff
- Management Committee

Data Collected using: for example

questionnaires, 2006 annual conference, workshops, telephone interviews,  
1-2-1 interviews, staff meetings

aprilmayk@btinternet.com

## RESPONSES

PRU Heads	PRU Teaching Staff	Key Stakeholders YOT SS Management Committee (excluding carers and students)	PRU Non Teaching Staff LSAs Youth Workers	LEA Officers EPs Advisors Behaviour Support Teachers	Mainstream Teaching Staff (including head teachers, SENCOs teachers)
85%					
	52%	42%	40%		
				22%	
					10%

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## QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Q. From your experience what do you perceive as a successful PRU?

R. "...a good PRU has a staff team that is committed to the same thing, an ethos where staff and students respect each other...."

"...where there is a good ethos..."

"...where students are reintegrated successfully in to mainstream school..."

"...a place where students achieve..."

"...where expectations of staff and students are high..."

"...A place where staff feel staff..."

"...Where other agencies and providers are welcome... nothing to hide..."

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Q. From your experience what needs to be in place to create a successful PRU?

R. "...understanding and supportive staff..."

"...appropriate accommodation..."

"...committed staff..."

"...someone able to keep control..."

"...good ethos..."

"...good policies that all staff understand and work to..."

"...good links with LEA and mainstream schools..."

"...well trained and experienced staff..."

"...a strong head..."

"...good teaching and learning

"...an appropriate curriculum..."

"...appropriate funding..."

aprilmayk@btinternet.com



Who or what is responsible for making sure these things are in place?

### THE HEAD!!!!!!!!!!

What makes a good Head – what qualities, skills do they need to have?

<i>organisation skills</i>	<i>admin skills</i>	<i>able to make quick decisions</i>
<i>able to listen</i>	<i>knowledgeable</i>	<i>defend staff rights</i>
<i>protect rights of the child</i>	<i>collaborative</i>	<i>committed</i>
<i>someone who can take control</i>	<i>sense of humour</i>	<i>loyal</i>
<i>flexible</i>	<i>good team worker</i>	<i>good leader</i>
<i>Someone able to manage challenging behaviour</i>	<i>straight talker</i>	
<i>None confrontational</i>	<i>able to confront difficult and dangerous students</i>	

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### Activity

List the five most important skills, qualities or characteristics a PRU Head needs to have to develop and support a successful PRU.

List 5 things, in order of importance, that you think need to be in place to achieve a successful PRU.

aprilmayk@btinternet.com

It was clear that PRU staff wanted a 'strong head' but what were the properties of that behaviour. I asked this question during interviews, there were three types of responses.

**(Type 1) A clear visioned person with determination, nerve, with the ability to challenge everything and make decisions.**

"...a good head has got to have a 'get a grip mentality'..."

"...they should have a strong personality and clear boundaries..."

"...ability to make decisions, and take responsibility for those decisions..."

" have the ability to challenge and confront behaviour and attitude from staff, as well as students..."

"...be able to problem solve"

"...lead from the front with determination"

"...strength, purpose and nerve, they'll need nerve because they'll face challenges from every direction..."

aprilmayk@btinternet.com

**(Type 2) Someone who is sensitive to others, with good listening and negotiating skills.**

*"...someone who can listen to the concerns of staff..."*

*"...they have to have good listening skills... they have to be flexible and willing to negotiate..."*

*"...someone who takes time to get all the information and opinions of all staff before making a decision or making changes..."*

*"...sensitive to the needs of the students and the staff..."*

*"...someone who knows and understands our concerns and feeling..."*

aprilmayk@btinternet.com

**(Type 3) Someone who changes behaviours as events and individual staff needs change**

*"...This is a hard question...what I need changes..."*

*"...When I first filled in the questionnaire we were having a number of problems with a group of students, they've moved off site now... what I said then is different to what I would say now..."*

*"...A good head is someone that has a bag of tricks up their sleeves...they have to be different for different people..."*

*"...well, when I first started I wanted the head to direct me, he didn't and I struggled, I thought he was too airy fairy... I suppose I was anxious and didn't have that confidence in myself.... He'd asked me what I thought ... o moved for a while and worked with a different, more directive Head...now I know what I am doing and I feel much more confident...now I am happy with him I get space and can be creative..."*

*"...it depends on what is happening...they need to have lots of things..."*

*"...well its not like I first said ...we were heading toward an inspection and I suppose we all needed a lot of direction...only some of the staff had been through an inspection before ... I think I would describe the behaviours of a good head differently now because the stress is off..."*

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### **Final Activity – discussion**

•Q & A

•What is your view of the interim findings?

•Are there any big 'gaps'?

What other questions, if any, do I need to ask?

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**PRU National Conference 2008**  
**Feedback Workshop**

KEY STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT MAKES A  
 SUCCESSFUL PRU

**AIMS**

- To share research findings
- Discuss findings

**Activities**

- There are a couple!!

*AM Kitchener  
 Qualitative Study  
 Glamorgan University*

This is how respondents describe a successful PRU

*A successful PRU is where there is an ethos of respect and understanding, where students develop the social and emotional needs that enable them to take part in the mainstream (not necessarily mainstream school). Where students achieve academically because staff use strategies that support their individual learning needs. Where staff achieve as individuals and as a a whole staff team.*

**SAMPLE GROUPS**

• LEA Officers	• PRU Heads – 85%
• Mainstream teaching Staff	• PRU teaching Staff – 52%
• PRU Heads	• YOS / SS / Management Committee 42%
• PRU teaching staff	• PRU Non teaching staff – 40%
• PRU Non teaching staff	• LEA Officers – 22%
• SS / YOS / Management Committee	• Mainstream teaching Staff – 10%

***What order in term of percentage do you think responded?***

### Main Focus Question

From your experience what needs to be in place to create a successful PRU?

ethos / teaching / premises / funding / team work / positive atmosphere /  
respect between staff and students / guidance / links with mainstream /  
links with LEA / multi-agency working / supportive head teacher /  
experienced head teacher / knowledgeable head teacher.....

*I asked who was responsible for making sure these were in place*

**The PRU Head Teacher it seems is responsible for the PRU Success!!!**

**As well as the failing PRUs**

### A QUALITY PRU HEAD TEACHER IS:

*A clear visioned person with determination, nerve, with the ability to challenge everything and make decisions, who is sensitive to others, with good listening and negotiating skills and someone one who changes behaviours as events and individual staff needs change.*



### Descriptors of a successful PRU Head Teacher

problem solver	flexible	clear vision
get a grip mentality	empathetic	good listener
walks the walk	tenacity	able to prioritise
enthusiasm	dynamic	energy
caring	confident	kindness
negotiating skills	able to make decisions	resilient
hard working	inspiring	responsive
quick thinker	passionate	patient
able to take responsibility	holistic	able to challenge
open	creative	brave
determined	high expectations	able to coach
consultative	humility	strategic thinker
motivational	calmness	risk taker
approachability	emotionally intelligent	integrity
sense of reality	pupil centred	organised
objective	able to complete tasks	firm but fair
role model	efficient	interchangeable
lead from the front	sensitive to needs of others	persistent
stand up for beliefs	influential	knowledgeable
multi-tasker	be all things to all people	forward thinker
high expectations	good team builder	supportive
non confrontational	able to challenge behaviour	able to prioritise
inspirational	able to create boundaries	energetic
optimistic	able to read between the lines	dedicated
someone with lots of strategies	reflective	

**Some data collected from PRU National Conferences**

From all data collected I created six categories

1. *Demanding/Challenging*
2. *Pastoral*
3. *Thoughtful/Thinker*
4. *Innovative*
5. *Strategic*
6. *Committed*

#### **Demanding/Challenging**

*A professional who has very high expectations of themselves, the staff they support and the students they guide. They are clear about the boundaries and will challenge inappropriate student or staff behaviour that does not enable student and staff success. There are clear consequences as well as clear and valued rewards.*

##### **Summary**

PRU Head Teacher Intention	<b>Staff:</b> The best service for the PRU students and your colleagues <b>Students:</b> your past is not your potential
Style in a phrase	'You know what you should have done, you haven't done it - now you do as I say'
When this style works best	<b>Staff:</b> when there is a crisis - staff not working with commitment, poor teaching and learning, poor quality of partnership with students and other staff <b>Student:</b> crisis - expectations and boundaries made clear and student not working appropriately within the boundaries and expectations
Overall impact	<b>Staff:</b> Positive for the staff members when they see that a staff member is being challenged and 'told' to take responsibility for their professional behaviour. Would be perceived as negative if this was the only skill the PRU Head Teacher had - this would result very quickly into a failing PRU <b>Students:</b> Initially could be negative as students 'butt up' against boundaries, consistency by the PRU Head Teacher will quickly turn this to positive impact for student group. Students will see that boundaries are in place, this helps eliminates bullying, students feel safe, students feel empowered to see they can achieve. Positive for whole staff team, staff will feel safe; they are able to work in an environment that allows them to teach.

#### **Activity!!!**

Working in small groups (or larger) discuss the summary tables for each of the remaining five categories

What are your thoughts?

Do they need to change?

Do you agree, if so why, if not why?



### Pastoral

*A professional that is sensitive to the needs of staff and students that will enable them to achieve. They are supportive and are able to create an environment where students, staff and other professionals feel able to ask for help and share concerns.*

#### Summary

PRU Head Teacher intention	<b>Staff:</b> I'm working with you to improve your chances and the chances of our students <b>Student:</b> I've got faith in you, I will show you which 'road' to take
Style in a phrase	'I know you can do it – let's try this
When this style works best	<b>Staff:</b> supporting staff to cope with change in terms of strategies when working with students and when staff are coping with more strategic changes <b>Student:</b> as a strategy in de-escalating conflict, when students are being introduced to new tasks and there are levels of anxiety, tool to use in avoiding crisis
Overall impact	<b>Staff:</b> can be seen by some staff as negative if they do not want to 'change', but overall very positive when staff experience <b>Student:</b>

### Thoughtful/Thinker

*A professional that is cerebral, who is evidence based, clear thinking, able to analyse feedback and use that information to problem solve and move opportunities forward for students and other professionals.*

#### Summary

PRU Head Teacher intention	<b>Staff:</b> these changes need to happen, or we need to continue in this way and this is why based <b>Student:</b> evidence based teaching and learning – proof that it works
Style in a phrase	Is this the best way forward
When this style works best	<b>Staff:</b> planning for change for national and local initiatives, for developing staff understanding of government guidance <b>Student:</b> enabling students to be part of the decision making – when complicated information needed to be shared with students to enable to 'included'
Overall impact	<b>Staff:</b> this could be a negative style if the only style used or the strongest characteristic. Overall very positive keeping up top date with mainstream schools <b>Student:</b> Overall very positive as keep opportunities and expectations high

### Innovative

*A professional that is creative in their thinking, is a quick thinker, able to multi-task with strategies that engage and enable*

#### Summary

PRU Head Teacher intention	<b>Staff:</b> keep a safe environment that enables students and staff to keep moving forward <b>Student:</b> to move students forward enough to be able to take responsibility for themselves
Style in a phrase	If we can't achieve they way we are working we must work in a way we can achieve
When this style works best	<b>Staff:</b> in avoiding crisis <b>Student:</b> when supporting students to move forward encouraging them to avoid repeating the same mistakes
Overall impact	<b>Staff:</b> can be negative for some staff; will challenge some staff in that they may need to reflected on their own practice but overall positive <b>Student:</b> :challenging for students in that they will have look at their own

### **Strategic**

*A professional with a view to the future with a long term view to their planning and who understands that working with the whole person and all agencies is the way forward*

#### **Summary**

PRU Head Teacher intention	<b>Staff:</b> protecting resources as well as jobs <b>Student:</b> developing equal opportunities
Style in a phrase	<i>Seeing the bigger picture</i>
When this style works best	<b>Staff:</b> PRU evaluation of <b>Student:</b> Student evaluation – do we have to make changes for future student success
Overall impact	<b>Staff:</b> positive provides security and sense of belonging <b>Student:</b> positive for the student of tomorrow

### **Committed**

*A professional who is a 'doer' as well as a talker, gets the work done and is persistent in their drive to achieve success, will challenge the rights of the child and the rights of other professionals*

#### **Summary**

PRU Head Teacher intention	<b>Staff:</b> if it needs doing then get it done <b>Student:</b> do what needs to be done and you will get what you need
Style in a phrase	<i>If you don't achieve the first time, try again</i>
When this style works best	<b>Staff:</b> when placing demands on staff they must see that the Head will not ask them to do anything they will not do themselves <b>Student:</b> after dealing with crisis and trying to re-engage students, defending the rights of the students
Overall impact	<b>Staff:</b> very positive <b>Student:</b> very positive

### **Finally**

These 'categories' were then compared against:

*McGregor Theory X (management)*

*McGregor Theory Y (leadership)*

*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*

They did not belong in any one place, but touched on all.

It seems that to be successful in the PRU Head Teacher role you must be able to demonstrate these characteristics – there is no order to their use, they are not predictable in their response – they are a complex mix

***Discuss!!!!!!!!!!***

**REACTIVE PLAN – Autumn Term 2007**

Student Name: \*\*\*\*\*

DOB: \*\*\*\*\*

**Additional Information**

**Contain picture  
of student**

- **SEN Statement** – motor skills difficulties, speech and language difficulties
- **ADHD** – Concerta, administered by mother before school
- **YOT** - 6 month Supervision Order – YOT worker \*\*\*\*\*
- **No lone working**
- **No change to provision without discussion with AMK**
- **If refusing to eat lunch inform AMK or SW**

**Triggers**

- No breakfast
- No cigarettes
- Not being allowed to use his mobile
- Conflict at home with siblings and mother
- Visit from YOT worker
- Court appearance
- New female students
- Change of staff

**Cues**

- Head down no eye contact
- Change in breath – shorter high chest
- Speech quicker
- Toner higher
- When talking hands as high as shoulders
- Less on-task time
- Sitting away from staff and other students during break

**Behaviours**

- Pacing
- Ripping paper
- Screwing up paper
- Swearing
- Sometime cries
- Aggressive verbally to students and staff
- Pull at displays
- Leaves the classroom
- 'Wedging' female students
- Physical confrontation with females staff
- Physical threats and confrontation to other, smaller, less able students

**Behaviour Management Strategies**

- **Remain calm**
- **Distract from trigger**
- **Offer tea, coffee and toast**
- **Lots of verbal praise for complying even with smallest task**
- **Use school phone for emergencies**
- **Remind \*\*\*\*\* of rewards**
- **Off time out of class to talk**
- **Use other staff member to engage**
- **Remind \*\*\*\*\* of rules and agreements**
- **Inform Miss Kitchener**
- **Time with Miss Kitchener**

Signed

Date